OCCLUDED ACADEMIC GENRES: AN ANALYSIS OF THE MBA THOUGHT ESSAY

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my mom and dad, and my lovely wife Jessica.

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by

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Abstract

In recent years, researchers in applied linguistics have become increasingly interested in the application of genre theory and analysis. In advanced academics, the genres of disciplinary communities serve gate-keeping functions that students must negotiate in order to succeed in their academic endeavors. Often without explicit instruction, students must learn to master the stylistic, rhetorical, and organizational conventions of their disciplinary communities. This problem is confounded by occluded genres – genres whose exemplars are private or confidential, and thus cannot be readily used as models. The present study uses mixed methodologies to examine one occluded academic genre – the MBA "Thought Essay." Utilizing genre analysis and corpus linguistics, the present study identified the salient lexico-grammatical, rhetorical, and socio-communicative features of the genre. The findings revealed highly assessed genre exemplar texts are characterized by essay length and high use of reference and citation, whereas poorly assessed texts are characterized by frequent use of second person pronouns. Moreover, rhetorical structure of essays displayed a high degree of variation, suggesting an emerging nascent genre of a local, university level MBA discourse community. The findings suggest the "Thought Essay" is a hybrid genre featuring characteristics of both academic discourse and popular business texts.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Following the thirty year reign of process-based writing pedagogies, there has been a recent spate of interest in the application of genre theory and analysis to the language learning classroom. Although the two approaches are not mutually exclusive, genre-based pedagogies address some of the limitations of process writing by explicitly focusing on generic forms and the socio-cultural contexts that shape the writing process. Three schools of thought have positively impacted the application of genre-based pedagogies: the "Sydney School" has implemented genre-based curricula in the Australian public school system; English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) has been influential in L2 undergraduate "writing across the curriculum" education; and English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) has targeted the needs of graduate students and professionals in specific academic disciplines. Although these pedagogies have made great strides in both addressing the limitations of process approaches and revealing the "invisible pedagogy," little research has focused on the occluded genres of academia – genres whose exemplars "are typically hidden, 'out of sight' or 'occluded' from the public gaze by a veil of confidentiality" (Swales, 1996, p. 46). Following a brief discussion of the key terms and issues in advanced academic literacy and genre-based instruction, an overview of the present research is provided.

Genre Analysis and Discourse Communities

In the context of academic literacy the term "genre" has come to reflect a number of differing views. According to Swales (1990), a genre is a "class of communicative events… [with a] communicative purpose" (p. 58). Following Berkenkotter and Huckin's (1993) theoretical framework of genre, Connor (1990) argues,

> (1) genres are dynamic rhetorical forms developed as responses to recurrent situations, which change over time in response to users' needs; (2) knowledge of genres is derived from participation in the communicative activities of daily and professional life; (3) this knowledge embraces form and content, including a sense of appropriate topics to write about; (4) through participation in organizational and disciplinary genres, humans constitute social structures and reproduce these as they draw on genre rules while engaging in professional activities; and (5) genre conventions signal the norms and ideologies of a discourse community. (p. 128)

Bhatia (2002) additionally argues that genres are defined by "the use of language in conventionalized communicative settings, which give expression to a specific set of communicative goals of specialized disciplinary and social groups" (p. 23). Most recently, Bazerman (1997) has claimed:

> Genres are not just forms. Genres are forms of life, ways of being. They are frames for social action. They are environments for learning. They are locations within which meaning is constructed. Genres shape the thoughts we form and the communications by which we interact. Genres are the familiar places we go to create intelligible communicative action with each other and the guideposts we use to explore the familiar. (p. 19)

Although there is a seemingly wide range of views on genre, by identifying the common points, the present research defines genre as any conventionalized discourse that serves a socio-communicative purpose and is recognized and used by members of a discourse community.

Likewise, the term "discourse community" has been defined in numerous ways. For Swales (1990), a discourse community is simply a group of individuals with "common public goals [and]... mechanisms of intercommunication among its members" (p. 24). Barton describes a discourse community as:

> A group of people who have texts and practices in common, whether it is a group of academics, or the readers of teenage magazines. In fact, discourse community can refer to the people a text is aimed at; it can be the people who read a text; or it can refer to the people who participate in a set of discourse practices both by reading and writing. (Barton 1994: 57), quoted in Bex, 1996: 65)

Perhaps the easiest way to describe discourse community is through illustration. A small, local academic discourse community – a chemistry department, for example, is comprised of professors, instructors, researchers and students at a particular university. The key genres of this community include the research article, the PhD dissertation, the book review, the textbook, and the conference presentation, among others. Some of these genres are public in that they are easily accessible, while private genres (such as a paper written by a student for a professor) are occluded in that they cannot be readily accessed. The specialized lexis and stylistic conventions of these genres serve to demarcate ingroup/outgroup boundaries between disciplines. In addition, academic genres also function in socializing novice members into the norms and conventions of the parent discourse community. As Berkenkotter and Huckin (1993) note, "learning the genres of disciplinary or professional discourse would… be similar to second language acquisition, requiring immersion into the culture, and a lengthy period of apprenticeship and enculturation. In contrast, undergraduate university students… learn many institutional, or curriculum, genres… we would contend that many of these pedagogical genres contain *some* of the textual features

and *some* of the conventions of disciplinary genres" (p. 487). In the chemistry community, for example, the lab report and critical essay genres serve to teach the community values and norms to new members.

Genre analysis is an inductive method of identifying the essential lexico-grammatical and structural features of a genre. The aim of genre analysis is twofold: "first, to characterize typical or conventional textual features of any genre-specific text in an attempt to identify pedagogically utilizable form-function correlations; and second, to explain such a characterization in the context of the socio-cultural as well as the cognitive constraints operating in the relevant area of specialization, whether professional or academic" (Bhatia, 1993, p. 16).

As many have argued (see Bhatia, 1993; Kern, 2000; Swales, 1990; Wennerstrom, 2003), the importance of genre in advanced L1/L2 academic literacy cannot be overstated. Because the language, organization, and rhetoric of academic and professional writing differ significantly from that of "everyday" English, it is necessary (even for native English speaking students) to acquire these sociolinguistic conventions. Students, if they are to succeed in their academic and professional careers, must learn to master the stylistic, rhetorical, and organizational conventions of potentially dozens of different genres. As Schleppegrell (2002) notes, "nonnative speakers are at a particular disadvantage, because they may have both limited resources in English and less experience with the genre and register expected in the assignments they are given" (p. 120). The mastery of discipline-specific genre-knowledge is critical to advanced literacy and the access to higher academic and professional institutions it entails. Often, the genres of a discourse community serve a gate-keeping function to institutions of higher learning. Wennerstrom (2003) argues that new students, who are often completely unaware of generic conventions, are nevertheless "expected to use many of these genres in order to participate in academic activities.

This situation may pose a particular challenge for students who have been educated in other countries… [because] the degree to which the conventions of a genre may be transferable cross-culturally varies from genre to genre " (p. 124).

Although a critical component of advanced academic success, generic knowledge is seldom explicitly taught in university courses; rather, both L1 and L2 students are expected to *acquire* discipline-specific genre knowledge slowly over a period of years through continuous exposure to genre-specific texts and an arduous process of writing and rewriting. In order to be accepted into a particular discourse community, one must master its conventions. According to Kern (2000), "we learn these conventions through apprenticeship, by observing what established members say and do and by gradually appropriating features of these sayings and doings for ourselves" (p. 183). To complicate matters, it is not just writing that must be mastered, but other discourses as well:

> Academic discourse takes place on a variety of levels: casual hallway chats, lectures, conversations between teachers and students in and out of class, e-mail memos, scholarly papers, books. Each of these is a form of academic 'conversation,' with a variety of levels of formality, personal involvement, number of participants, etc…. New members must learn style, vocabulary, citation format, organization and length of texts or talk. (Bergvall, 1992)

Although initiation is problematic even for native speakers, they enjoy the benefit of years of background knowledge including familiarity with numerous registers and genres, both spoken and written. L2 students, on the other hand, are "less likely to be exposed to the full range of text genres that are commonly read by L1 students, partly because a number of these genres are read outside of class or even outside of education task requirements" (Grabe & Stoller, 2002, p. 57).

An additional problem in academic writing instruction is the relationship between professor and student. As former students who have successfully mastered the discourse conventions of their communities, professors and academic advisors often serve as writing mentors to initiate students. Having undergone similar initiation rites, mentors are more likely to be sensitized to the types of problems encountered by their L1 students who share a similar background. Because the types of problems L2 writers encounter in academic writing are not "typical" of L1 students, professor feedback may be inadequate for their needs. The abundance of surface-level errors in L2 texts, for example, often distracts instructors from attending to more serious matters such as discourse-level features, meaning, and content. As Schleppegrell (2002) notes, "just responding to discrete ESL errors is not enough to bring students' writing in line with the more academic register that they need to adopt…. Even if every surface error were corrected, these students would still not be presenting [texts] that have the authoritative voice and clear method of development that characterize" (p. 139) native texts. Because the feedback they receive is often inadequate, L2 students must face yet another hurdle in mastering the "invisible curriculum" of graduate-level academics.

Fortunately, over the past twenty-five years, genre-based pedagogies such as those produced by ESAP, EGAP, and the "Sydney School" have played an increasingly important role in both L1 and L2 writing instruction. Unfortunately, however, much of this research has focused on public, easily accessible genres such as the research article and the dissertation to the neglect of occluded genres – genres whose exemplars are often private or confidential. Addressing this lack, the present study presents a detailed analysis of a particular occluded classroom genre – the MBA Thought Essay. In this genre, MBA students briefly respond to a popular business quote or adage, such as "*Soul, spirit, and faith are central to organizational leadership*" or "*Trust is the*

single most important element of social capital entrusted to organizational leaders." As a genre, the Thought Essay is characterized by a high degree of structural and linguistic variation, but shares features in common with academic discourse and popular business and management literature.

Research Questions

Incorporating insights from contrastive rhetoric, genre analysis, and corpus linguistics, this research study contextualizes the Thought Essay in the broader discourse community and identifies the significant lexico-grammatical features and textual structure of the genre. Specifically, this research addresses the following research questions:

RQ 1. What are the salient linguistic, organizational, and socio-communicative features of the Thought Essay genre as embodied in genre exemplars?

RQ 2. What are the common linguistic and organizational characteristics of poorly assessed target genre texts?

RQ 3. What are the key linguistic differences between poorly assessed texts and genre exemplars?

Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature

Since the late 1960s, discourse analysis has played an integral role shaping both second language acquisition (SLA) theory and pedagogy. As defined by Kaplan and Grabe (2002), discourse analysis is a hermeneutical process that examines the linguistic signals and rhetorical structures of texts in order to understand how they contribute to comprehension and interpretation. Although discourse analysis has applications in fields ranging from sociolinguistics to semiotics and literary criticism, in advanced academic literacy it presents itself in three specific manifestations: contrastive rhetoric, corpus linguistics, and genre analysis. Each of these three approaches has, in turn, helped demystify academic discourse by providing pedagogical alternatives to the "invisible pedagogy."

Contrastive Rhetoric

Over the past three decades, the field of contrastive rhetoric has examined the discourse-level patterns of written texts in relationship to the rhetorical traditions of numerous cultures and languages. Kaplan, in his seminal 1966 "doodles" article identified how L1 rhetorical patterns can interfere with L2 texts at the level of discourse, sparking a debate that has continued to this day. The intervening years witnessed the creation of contrastive rhetoric, a subfield of discourse analysis that attempts to discover the differences in writing between cultures. According to Connor (2002), the goal of contrastive rhetoric is to examine the "differences and similarities in ESL and EFL writing across languages and cultures as well as across such different contexts as education and commerce" (p. 493). Following the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis[1] which asserts that

[1] For an overview of the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, see Connor (1996, pp. 28-29). For a more in-depth analysis of Whorf's views on linguistic relativism, see Lee (1996).

language controls and influences thought, Kaplan claimed that language and logic are culturally specific. He wrote:

> Logic… which is the basis of rhetoric, is evolved out of culture; it is not universal. Rhetoric, then, is not universal either, but varies from culture to culture and even from time to time within a given culture. It is affected by canons of taste within a given culture at a given time. (Kaplan, 1966, p. 2)

From this position, Kaplan examined the texts of non-native speakers (NNS) of English in an attempt to uncover any culturally-specific rhetorical patterns that may have found expression in the student essays. Specifically, Kaplan maintained that a student's L1 socio-rhetorical conventions would be reflected in their English L2 texts, which would in turn be negatively assessed by native speakers (NS) of English who have their own cultural preference in rhetorical conventions. Kaplan (1966), in examining the discourse-level organization of ESL student essays, identified five distinct types of argument development employed by the five different socio-cultural groups in his study. Kaplan's analysis of expository essays suggested that Anglo-Europeans use a linear approach to argumentation; Semitic languages use parallel coordinate clauses; Oriental languages use an indirect approach, stating their main point only at the end; and in Romance languages and Russian, a certain amount of digression and extraneous material was permitted. Kaplan recommended that in order to make their English writing more native-like, ESL students should study model compositions that embody the "straight line" style of Anglo-American rhetorical development.

As Connor (1996) notes, Kaplan's pioneering study has since been criticized for numerous reasons: for privileging English NS texts through an ethnocentric bias (Matalene, 1985); for focusing exclusively upon final products, neglecting educational contexts and writing

processes (Mohan & Lo, 1985); and for disregarding cultural and linguistic differences by grouping Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Thai writers into a single "Oriental" category (Hinds, 1983). Other early contrastive rhetoric studies have also been criticized for the untenable assumptions they make. First, in assuming that cultures indelibly stamp norms, conventions, and organizational patterns upon their members, these studies suggest that all writers from the same cultural group are basically the same (Kubota, 1998a). Second, by focusing on the differences among rhetorical patterns and assuming that all transference is negative, early studies fail to examine the positive influence that similarity of pattern may have on L2 compositions. Finally, in assuming that contrastive rhetoric can be explained entirely through the examination of texts, early studies fail to investigate how the writers themselves evaluate their own texts. In suggesting an alternative to text-only analysis, Kubota (1998b) proposes an approach that incorporates both *emic* and *etic* data (i.e., participant comments and textual analysis) in describing the phenomenon.

Although some criticisms have been levied against earlier studies in contrastive rhetoric, recent years have witnessed resurgence of popularity in this approach. Ostler (2002) notes that recent contrastive rhetoric studies have expanded their focus to include analysis of less common L1 groups (e.g., Malay, Bengali, Swedish, and Finnish). This focus has also expanded to include a greater variety of genres, such as telephone calls (Ron, 1993), newspaper editorials (Ricento, 1989), and curricula vitae (Bhatia, 1993). Although their findings are mixed, these studies help illuminate some of the problems L2 writers encounter when producing academic writing in English. Addressing some of the limitations of early contrastive rhetoric studies, Hirose (2003) examined the differences in organizational patterns between L1 and L2 texts written by the *same* student, how students evaluate their own organizational patterns, and how organizational pattern

relates to text assessment. Hirose made several noteworthy observations, including his recognitions that good L1 writers are not necessarily good L2 writers (and vice versa), and that the use of "western" deductive patterns does not necessarily result in higher text assessment. From these observations, Hirose infers that organizational pattern alone is not the only factor "that contributes to quality of text organization and text quality" (p. 203). Other factors, such as textual coherence and cohesion may be more important factors in text assessment.

In investigating the relationship of L1/L2 discourse patterns to ESL essay quality, Kubota (1998a) accepts the possibility that individual differences may more readily influence L2 compositions than L1 cultural patterns do. As does Hirose, Kubota uses qualitative data elicited from participants to help explain the data from a native perspective. Unlike the conclusions of Hirose, which are drawn on potentially biased student comments[2], Kubota's participant-based explanations are more natural and thus more credible. Although the study is similarly small (N = 22 and N = 24), there are notable improvements over Hirose's research methods. First, in drawing participants from six different universities with differing backgrounds and majors, Kubota's sample is more diverse and thus more reflective of the larger academic community it seeks to understand. Second, whereas Hirose had participants write from a single prompt, Kubota's participants were involved in producing two different genres of writing (i.e., expository and argumentative essays). By having students write on two topics, Kubota ensured that any genre-specific organizational influences might be identified in the data. Third, although neither researcher forewarned students of the writing task, Kubota (1998a) additionally made "an

[2] In order to give students the meta- language to discuss their essays, Hirose (2003) had instructed students to read Kubota (1998a) before writing their evaluations. As Hirose notes, Kubota's arguments and conclusions may have unduly influenced students' perceptions and reflections, thus undermining the validity of her conclusions.

attempt to counterbalance the order of languages" (p. 77) in order to minimize order-related interference and translation between tasks.

In contrastive rhetoric research, the study of Rinnert and Kobayashi (2001) is immediately notable for its large sample size (n = 465) and its focus upon *readers* rather than *writers*. Although Rinnert and Kobayashi argue that parent societies influence individual rhetorical preference, they also assert that exposure to, and experience with L2 reading and writing influence individual choice as well. Specifically, Rinnert and Kobayashi "assume that students with some L2 writing experience may demonstrate developmental stages in their acquisition of [and preference for] target language rhetorical features" (2001, p. 190). Rinnert and Kobayashi also maintain that textual analysis alone is insufficient to explain the entire phenomenon of contrastive rhetoric. In utilizing a mixed methodologies approach, they make liberal use of participant comments in explaining their quantitative data. They found that there was a "gradual change in Japanese readers' perceptions of English compositions from preferring the writing features of their first language (L1) to preferring many of the writing features of the second language (L2)" (Rinnert & Kobayashi, 2001, p. 189). These findings help indicate the important function of education in the literacy socialization of students.

In essence, contrastive rhetoric seeks to identify the preferred rhetorical patterns of various L1 socio-cultural groups, in order to integrate that information into more effective pedagogical approaches. By understanding these rhetorical patterns, it is argued, ESL/EFL teachers will be able to raise awareness of L1/L2 interference issues in their students as they grapple with producing acceptable academic writing. In the words of McDaniel (1994), it is hoped that "contrastive rhetoric will contribute insights that will make it easier to comprehend, to edit, and to write professional text composed in English as a second or foreign language" (p. 29).

Matsuda (1997) additionally argues that contrastive rhetoric involves raising "students' awareness of the various factors that are involved in structuring [text] including the reader's expectations of certain organizational patterns" (p. 56). Sengupta (1999) is one such study that focuses on raising rhetorical consciousness in the L2 classroom. Lacking rules that can be explicitly taught (as the rules of grammar can be), Sengupta's pedagogical approach focuses on specific rhetorical devices such as discourse signaling, genre stages, and organizational structures found in various genres. Sengupta's (1999) reading-based approach to rhetorical awareness "included exploring how to recognize, interpret, and examine the linguistic and rhetorical features of the text that the writer may have chosen to facilitate the readers' process of making meaning" (p. 292). Although his study is confined to reading, Sengupta's strategies of rhetorical consciousness-raising hold promise for application in writing-based pedagogies.

Corpus Linguistics

Although much insight has been gained through contrastive rhetoric, the typically small size of these studies has limited the generalizations that can be drawn from them. Fortunately, with the advent of large, digital repositories of spoken and written discourse, the past two decades have witnessed the emergence of corpus linguistics as a solution to this problem. In essence, corpus linguistics, through the use of computers, databases, and specialized software, provides a means of collecting, structuring, and interpreting large volumes of both spoken and written discourse. As noted by Flowerdew (2002), the manipulation of this data "has resulted in a myriad of pedagogic materials for English for General Purposes, such as dictionaries, grammars, and course books" (p. 95).

In using corpus linguistics to examine both written and spoken language, Biber and his colleagues (1988; Biber & Conrad 2001; Biber, Conrad, Reppen, Byrd, & Helt 2002) propose a

multi-dimensional (MD) analytic approach to the investigation of register variation. Biber and Conrad (2001) define *register* as

> a cover term for any language variety defined in terms of a particular constellation of situational characteristics. That is, register distinctions are defined in non-linguistic terms, including the speakers purpose in communication, the topic, the relationship between speaker and hearer, and the production circumstances. (p. 3)

In order to explain variation between registers, MD corpus linguistics utilizes a mixed-methodology approach that incorporates both the quantitative and qualitative analysis of large bodies of text. Biber and Conrad argue that a quantitative, comparative approach is necessary in order to determine the distribution of linguistic features across registers and in identifying the relative rarity or commonness of those features. They write:

> A quantitative comparative approach allows us to treat register as a continuous construct, that is, as texts situated within a continuous space of linguistic variation. This approach should be contrasted with the attempt to identify *discrete* [emphasis added] linguistic characteristics that define categorical differences among registers…. When analyses are based on the co-occurrence and alternation patterns for groups of linguistic features, important differences across registers are revealed. (Biber & Conrad, 2001, p. 5)

In other words, they advocate a multi-dimensional[3] approach to corpus linguistics that examines register with respect to the full range of linguistic characteristics. In addition to quantitative

[3] Biber (1988) identifies several dimensions in which registers in spoken and written English can vary: involved vs. informational production; narrative vs. non-narrative concerns; explicit vs.

analysis, Biber and Conrad maintain that is also necessary to use qualitative techniques to identify the functional foundation underlying co-occurring linguistic features. Co-occurrence patterns, they argue, must be examined in terms of social, cognitive, and situational functions.

MD corpus-based studies continue to make headway in academic discourse analysis by describing the manner in which registers vary across dimensions. Granger and Rayson (1998), for example, examined word frequency in a non-native speaker corpus of argumentative essays written by French L1s, using as control a similar corpus comprised of writing from American and British university students. Finding that French L1s overused first and second person pronouns while underutilizing prepositions, Granger and Rayson concluded that their learner data was more characteristic of spoken English rather than academic English. Flowerdew (2002) examined the use of hedging devices by Hong Kong students of English. In the 200,000 word corpus of 90 analytical reports, numerous instances were observed in which students "presented explanations for their data and drew conclusions as a *certainty* [emphasis added] rather than based on plausible reasoning, resulting in writing which was too direct" for academic English. Another MD study (Biber et al., 2002), in attempting to describe the challenges faced by university students, examined a number of different spoken and written registers commonly encountered in academia[4]. Contrary to the belief that academic registers are strongly informational, they found that students are likely to encounter a number highly interactive registers as well. Tribble (2002) has additionally demonstrated how small, specialized corpora can be used in conjunction with larger ones in understanding student texts. Most recently, Xiao

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situation-dependent reference; overt expression of persuasion; abstract vs. non-abstract information; and on-line informational elaboration.

[4] The researchers examined registers including class sessions, classroom management, labs, office hours, study groups, service encounters, textbooks, course packs, course management, and other campus writing (Biber, et al., 2002).

and McEnery (2005) have shown how Tribble's key word analysis captures many of the important genre characteristics revealed by the more computationally and statistically complex MD analysis.

Although corpus-based studies have flourished in recent years, several problems have become evident. Aside from time and cost of compiling large corpora, Swales (2002) notes the difficulty in exploiting corpus material. Specifically, he argues that a large amount of trial-and-error is typically involved in extrapolating anything meaningful from the data. Additionally, Swales claims that the process of corpus analysis is essentially the opposite of that which intuition would dictate. He writes:

> One compounding difficulty [of corpus analysis]… is that this procedure is precisely the reverse of the process by which I, and I suspect many others, try to understand genre. This is typically a process which starts from macro features and only later tries to align these with particular linguistic realizations, and then looks for explanatory links between the macro and the micro. (Swales, 2002, pp. 151-152)

In distinction to the approach utilized by corpus linguistics, Swales advocates a genre analysis approach that starts first with an examination of the socio-cultural contexts in which texts operate, and only then, when insight has been developed, progressing to the analysis of actual discourse.

Genre Analysis

Although process approaches to writing dominated much of the past 30 years, large inroads have recently been made by genre-based theories of writing. Because process approaches

view writing as a means of discovery and self-expression (Zamel, 1983), they have been criticized on several related points. First, by focusing on individual cognitive processes, these approaches fail to account for the socio-cultural contexts that influence the writing process (Kern, 2000). Second, by downplaying textual forms, process-based approaches reinforce an "invisible pedagogy," effectively disadvantaging certain minority groups (Delpit, 1988). Finally, the lack of explicit textual models in process approaches makes it extremely difficult for L2 learners to learn the various types of writing they are expected to master at higher levels of L2 literacy (Kern, 2000). Genre-based theories attempt to address these limitations by focusing on the socio-cultural contexts that surround and shape the writing process.

Genre analysis has its roots in the pioneering work of Halliday, McIntosh, and Strevens (1964), which attempted a quantitative analysis of the linguistic properties of different functional varieties or *registers*. Halliday (1994) developed this early research into a comprehensive theory of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) that argues that language cannot be considered outside of its socio-cultural context. Of particular interest is the SFL notion of linguistic register. Halliday and Hassan (1989) define linguistic register as the collection of lexical and grammatical features that realize a particular socio-cultural context. The socio-cultural context includes the field (what is talked about), the tenor (the relationship between interlocutors), and the mode (expectations of discourse organization). As Colombi and Schleppegrell (2002) note, "every culture has genres that are realized through various configurations of register variables and that are recognized as meaningful and appropriate for achieving social purposes" (p. 10). Incorporating some of the key ideas and concepts of SFL, Swales (1984, 1990) almost single-handedly developed the definitions and methodologies of contemporary genre analysis and demonstrated how they could be used in practice to inform language teaching pedagogies. To

avoid confusion with similar terms, Swales is extremely deliberate in defining his constructs. Swales (1990) enumerates the characteristics of a *discourse community*:

> broadly agreed set of common public goals; mechanisms of intercommunication among its members; the use of participatory mechanisms to provide information and feedback; the utilization of genres in the furtherance of its communicative aims; the use of specific lexis; and a threshold level of members with a suitable degree of relevant content and discoursal expertise. (pp. 24-27)

Likewise, Swales takes equal care in defining genre. He claims that a genre

> comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. The purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style… In addition exemplars of a genre exhibit various patterns of similarity in terms of structure, style, content and intended audience. If all high probability expectations are realized, the exemplar will be viewed as prototypical by the parent discourse community. (Swales, 1990, p. 58)

According to Swales, one way to analyze genre is through structure. Specifically, he claims that generic texts are built up of a series of moves and sub-steps, each of which serves some function in achieving the overall socio-communicative purpose of the genre. Swales illustrates this point through his structural analysis of the academic research article (RA). Swales begins his analysis by identifying the socio-cultural and communicative purpose of the genre. In claiming that the overarching purpose of the RA introduction is to provide a rationale for the research (often by

showing a gap in or problem with current knowledge), Swales proposes a 3-move model of the genre. He illustrates the *Create a Research Space* (CARS) model:

Move 1 Establishing a territory
Step 1 claiming centrality and/or
Step 2 Making topic generalizations and/or
Step 3 Reviewing items of previous research

Move 2 Establishing a niche
Step 1A Counter-claiming or
Step 1B Indicating a gap or
Step 1C Question-raising or
Step 1D Continuing a tradition

Move 3 Occupying the niche
Step 1A Outlining purposes or
Step 1B Announcing present research
Step 2 Announcing principal findings
Step 3 Indicating RA structure. (Swales, 1990, p. 141)

The classroom examination of genre exemplars in terms of structure and register features, Swales argues, serves a number of pedagogical purposes. First, it is useful for both the reading and writing of academic research. Second, it allows for both breadth and depth in analysis. Additionally, it provides students with an "increasing control of the metalanguage (negotiation of knowledge claims, self-citation, metadiscourse, etc.) which, in turn, provides a perspective for critiquing their own writing and that of others" (Swales, 1990, p. 215).

Other studies (cf. Bhatia, 1991, 2002) echo a view of genre and genre analysis that is similar to Swales'. Bhatia (1993), for example, argues that the goal of applied genre analysis is to identify the typical discourse features of genre-specific texts in order to characterize them into "pedagogically utilizable form-function correlations" (p. 16). Additionally, these characterizations need to be fully explained in terms of socio-cultural context in which they are

realized. Extending the work of Swales, Bhatia proposes a concrete seven-step model of genre analysis:

1. Placing the given genre-text in a situational context.
2. Surveying existing literature.
3. Refining the situational/contextual analysis.
4. Selecting corpus.
5. Studying the institutional context.
6. Levels of linguistic analysis.
    Level 1: Analysis of lexico-grammatical features.
    Level 2: Analysis of text-patterning or textualization.
    Level 3: Structural interpretation of the text-genre.
7. Specialist information in genre analysis. (Bhatia, 1993, p. 22-34)

Although Swales' and Bhatia's models of genre analysis were originally developed for academic discourse, business, and legal genres, they have found successful application in a number of different studies, including the development of pedagogic materials (e.g., Swales & Freak, 1994; Wennerstrom, 2003).

Although genre theories, such as those proposed by Swales and Bhatia, explain L1/L2 writing largely in terms of socio-cultural context, they must also sufficiently address the issue of human agency. Specifically, genre theories must adequately explain individual cognitive processes as well as the degree of authorial autonomy in the writing process. Some genre theories, in response to the relativism engendered by process approaches, have hyper-corrected and removed most, if not all, human agency from their models. These models risk the criticism that they turn writers into "writing machines" who uncritically replicate culturally codified forms. The resultant pedagogies are, in turn, often criticized for feeding genre "recipes" to their students.

One such model is proposed by Hyland's (2003) "Genre-based pedagogies: A social response to process." For Hyland, L1 and L2 writing involves several interrelated dimensions including background knowledge, communicative purpose, and linguistic resources. The interplay of these dimensions, Hyland claims, can best be understood in a generic framework. His proposed model, which accepts the purposeful nature of discourse communities, helps explain both *similarity within* and *variety between* discourse communities. Generic forms, being embedded in specific socio-cultural discourse communities, reflect both "*inter-community diversity and intra-community homogeneity* [italics added]" (Hyland, 2003, p. 23). Although his model accounts for some similarity and variation in genre, it fails to adequately account for generic variation *within* discourse communities. Lacking from his model are the ideas of authorial agency and writer autonomy. Specifically, Hyland's model fails to accord the individual writer a place in his model. Writing is both a public and a private activity, in that it involves both socio-cultural context as well as individual cognitive processes (Kern, 2000). It is the individual writer, in negotiating the complex web of socio-cultural forces, who creates variation *within* the discourse community. As Breen and Candlin (1980) note,

> [Language users] typically exploit a tension between the conventions that are established and the opportunity to modify these conventions for their particular communicative purposes. Communicating is not merely a matter of following conventions but also of negotiating through and about the conventions themselves. It is a convention-creating as well as a convention-following activity. (p. 90)

Focusing too heavily on the socio-cultural context of writing, Hyland fails to acknowledge the individual cognitive processes that may influence textual forms. Another weakness of Hyland's model is the lack of explanation for genre change. For Hyland, genres are static,

conventionalized communication devices found in discourse communities. His model does not adequately address how discourse community genres can change under the internal influence of individual participants, as well as external forces. By failing to account for writing as an individual process by which socio-cultural contexts are negotiated, Hyland's model falls short in explaining both intra-community variation and genre evolution.

Ramanathan and Kaplan (2000) propose a genre-based model that addresses some of the limitations of Hyland's theories. They identify genre as the confluence of genre-stabilizing and genre-changing forces, a view which accounts for both intra-community genre variation as well as genre change. Following the work of Williams (1977), they argue that authors have consciousnesses that are socially constructed. Furthermore, they claim that because communication is a social phenomenon, authors should largely be viewed as social beings. Following this logic, Ramanathan and Kaplan maintain that genres, too, must be seen as socially created and maintained constructions. In essence, genres are conventionalized forms that vary with time and place as well as with the specific participants of a discourse community. The relationship between authors, genres, and discourse communities is dynamic and multi-directional in nature. "The author/L2 writing instructor, then – very much a part of both the discourse community and text production – *both forms and is formed* [italics added] by the text and the community" (Ramanathan & Kaplan, 2000, p. 176). In other words, the individual author is accorded a role of agency in the writing process.

In Ramanathan and Kaplan's model, authors, discourse communities, and texts all interact to create stability and change in generic forms. After attending to several mechanisms of genre stability, Ramanathan and Kaplan identify several means by which genres evolve. First, genres evolve to meet the socio-cognitive needs of the discourse community, as in the example

they cite, Huckin's (1987) study of scientific research articles. Huckin shows how experimental results are increasingly foregrounded in abstracts, titles, and introductions to meet the increasing demands on researchers' time. Second, genres evolve to accommodate the needs of changing technology. For example, the genre of letter writing has changed radically under the recent influence of e-mail. Third, genres evolve because of changes in the worldview of a discourse community, as in the use of the first person in anthropological monographs due to the influences of post-structuralist thought (Marcus & Fischer, 1986). Finally, genres change because individual authors take liberties with generic conventions (Gould & Lewontin, 1970). By introducing the ideas of generic change and stability, Ramanathan and Kaplan propose a model of genre that reintroduces a degree of authorial agency, and addresses some of the limitations of Hyland's model.

Matsuda (1997), in addressing the limited pedagogical contributions of contrastive rhetoric, proposes a genre-based model that grants the individual author a great degree of autonomy. Matsuda argues that contrastive rhetoric is based on a static theory of authorial autonomy which maintains a mechanistic view, in which the writer is a "writing machine" that creates discourse by reproducing linguistic, cultural, and educational patterns. In the L2 context, the static model places the ESL writer outside the context of the reader. In other words, by conflating the context of the reader, it forces sole responsibility on the writer to realize the schematic expectations of the reader.

In distinction to the static theory of L2 writing, Matsuda proposes a dynamic model in which the writer is invested with much more autonomy than in either Hyland's or Ramanathan and Kaplan's model. Matsuda's model reflects "the complexity of the process of decision making that writers go through as they respond to their perception of the particular context of

writing" (1997, p. 52). The three key components of Matsuda's model are (a) the backgrounds of the writer and reader, (b) the discourse community shared between the participants and (c) the bi-directional interaction of the L2 writing process in the dynamic environment. The backgrounds of the participants are much more complex in the dynamic model. In addition to the cultural, educational, and linguistic backgrounds accorded to the participants by the static model, the dynamic model also incorporates other pressures that may influence a writer's decisions. These include dialect variations, socio-economic class, background knowledge on the subject and the genre, membership in various discourse communities, as well as knowledge of the audience itself. Unlike the static model, in which the text was subsumed by the reader's socio-cultural background, the dynamic model views the discourse community as shared entity between writer and reader. For Matsuda, the writer and reader come together in the moment of reading to create meaning in the shared space of the discourse community. It is the discourse community, with its "broadly agreed set of common goals" and "mechanisms of intercommunication among its members," that enables and structures discourse (Matsuda, 1997, p. 54). Finally, Matsuda claims an inherent bi-directionality in the elements of the dynamic model. By this, he claims that genres change because of individual authors, and writers/readers change because of texts they interact with. According to Matsuda, the dynamic processes among writers, genres, and discourse communities, involve enculturation and renegotiation meaning and norms. It is precisely this level of dynamism and individual agency that is lacking in the models of Hyland and Ramanathan and Kaplan.

Research on Occluded Genres

Although contrastive rhetoric, corpus linguistics, and genre analysis have all contributed in shaping the contemporary L1/L2 educational landscape, little research has been devoted to

exploring occluded academic genres. The few studies that explicitly address occluded academic genres include: Swale's (1996, 2004) analysis of the research article submission letter and the Ph.D. defense; Kelly and Bazerman's (2003) analysis of university students' scientific writing; Aguilar's (2004) study of the peer seminar; and Gosden's (2003) analysis of RA peer reviews. The present study aims to add to this growing body of literature by utilizing a socio-functional model of genre and discourse community in examining the Thought Essay genre of the MBA academic discourse community.

Chapter 3: Method

This chapter provides a general overview of the design and methodology of the present study. Following a description of study participants, a brief overview of the Thought Essay genre is provided. Finally, this chapter concludes with a detailed account of the methodology used in this study.

Participants

Two categories of participants were involved in this research study: students and a professor. Student participants were volunteer first-year Executive MBA students at a mid-sized southern university. Students were enrolled in a mandatory course on organizational behavior. According to the course syllabus, the aim of the course was to "examine contemporary organizational behavior issues and how they impact us as leaders and to develop and expand our abilities to deal with leadership dilemmas and decisions." Participants were asked to a) provide digital copies of their Thought Essays and b) complete a short biographical questionnaire. For this research, 22 student participants were involved. They represent a variety of nationalities (e.g., United States, Great Britain, India, and Venezuela), and speak a variety of first and second languages including English, Spanish, Malay and Telugu among others. The ages of the participants ranged from 28 to 59 years old and education level ranged from BA/BS to PhD. Table 3-1 provides an overview of the participants involved in this investigation.

Table 3-1 Student Participants

ID	Gender	Nationality	Education	Native Language	Other Languages	Age
A	M	US	BA/BS	English	None	48
B	M	Venez.	BA/BS	Spanish	Itl., Port.	36
C	M	US	BA/BS	English	None	32
D	F	US	BA/BS	English	None	59
E	M	US	MA/MS	English	None	29
F	M	US	BA/BS	English	Spanish	38
G	M	India	BA/BS	Telugu	Telugu	36
H	M	US	BA/BS	English	Spanish	35
J	F	US	BA/BS	English	German	42
K	M	US	BA/BS	English	Spanish	43
L	F	US	BA/BS	English	Spanish	38
M	M	India	Prof.	Telugu	Hindi	34
N	M	US	BA/BS	Eng/Span.	Spanish	34
P	M	US	BA/BS	English	Spanish	37
Q	M	US	BA/BS	English	None	41
R	F	US	BA/BS	English	None	40
S	M	Irish	BA/BS	English	Fr/Russian	47
T	M	GB	BA/BS	English	Spanish	28
U	M	US/P.R.	BA/BS	English	Spanish	34
V	M	US	BA/BS	English	None	48
W	M	US	PhD	English	Malay	41
X	M	US	BA/BS	English	Spanish	41

In the role of genre expert, a single MBA professor (i.e. the instructor of the organizational behaviors class) was involved in this study. According to Bhatia (1993), the specialist informant should meet the following three criteria:

1. Be a competent and trained specialist member of the disciplinary culture in which the genre under study is routinely used.
2. Have a feel for the specialist language and also be prepared to talk about it openly, when asked searching questions about various aspects of the genre under study.

> 3. Be in a position to explain clearly what he believes expert members of the disciplinary culture do when they exploit language in order to accomplish their generic goals. (pp. 35-36)

In meeting these criteria, the genre expert for this study was involved in several key aspects of the research. The MBA professor assisted in the initial identification of the target genre and helped persuade students to volunteer for this project. In addition, the professor participated in several informal interview sessions designed to facilitate the identification and analysis of key genre features. Finally, the professor holistically assessed student Thought Essays according to the rubric presented in Table 3-2.

Table 3-2 Thought Essay Rubric

Score	Description
3	Outstanding or exemplary paper. If one of your students needed help writing Thought Essays, this is the type of model paper you would provide.
2	Average or typical paper. Thought Essay is typical of graduate student work in the EMBA program.
1	Below average or poor. Essay does not meet the expectations of the Thought Essay genre.

Thought Essay

The Thought Essay is a short, reflective paper that requires students to critically expound on a business statement, quote, or adage, such as "*Trust is the single most important element of social capital entrusted to organizational leaders.*" According to the course syllabus, Thought Essays are assessed on three criteria: (a) quality of graduate level writing; (b) depth of thinking; and (c) formation of questions that might further the exploration of the issues reflected by the statement. The course syllabus additionally contained a 25-point scoring rubric for students to consult while writing their essays:

Graduate level writing (10 points)

Effective Writing: Sentence structure, grammar, usage, spelling, capitalization, punctuation & paragraph construction. Interest: Narrative or argument builds to the main point in the conclusion, provides background or uses other devices to stimulate interest in the subject and provide a direction for the essay. Expression: Precise language and sentence patterns to express ideas. Unity: Each sentence in a paragraph adheres to the main idea of the paragraph; each paragraph adheres to the main idea of the essay. Organization and Coherence: Ideas arranged in a logical order; uses transitions and other cohesive devices to link ideas effectively within and between paragraphs. Conclusion logically completes the development of the thesis or builds to the main point of the essay.

Depth of thinking (15 points)

Voice: Writer's thoughts, personal interpretations of issues, and personality are evident in the writing; an integrated view of the topic in the writer's own words and style. Authority: Shows knowledge about the topic through the use of specific, accurate, and up-to-date information and/or examples. Analysis and Development: Thorough and clear exploration of concepts with critical examination of writer's own position and perspective. Supports or explains the thesis or builds to a logical conclusion. Fully developed with facts, examples, reasons, narration, description, comparison, cause and effect, process analysis, or other appropriate methods. Demonstrates complex reasoning and informed conclusions. Attitude and Creativity: Reflects a writer interested and connected to the topic. Demonstrates a unique approach to the topic. (Course Syllabus)

The present research focuses on three Thought Essay assignments students participated in during their first semester of the Executive MBA program. For their first assignment (due approximately three weeks into the semester), students were asked to respond to the following prompt: "*Tending the commons is the single most important responsibility of a leader in an organization.*" For assignment numbers two and three, students were allowed to choose their prompt from the remaining list:

> (1) An organization's success will be largely determined by its capacity to create healthy relationships.
> (2) Organizations would be fundamentally different if we as managers spent our time looking for order rather than looking for control.
> (3) The most powerful attractor in our lives and in organizations is meaning.
> (4) Soul, spirit, and faith are central to organizational leadership.
> (5) Organizational stories define who it is and who it will be.
> (6) Trust is the single most important element of social capital entrusted to organizational leaders. (Course Syllabus)

Genre Analysis

The present research utilized methods informed by *both* genre analysis and corpus linguistics. The genre analysis method used in this study was based on Swales' (1990) notion of inter/intra genre comparison; Bhatia's (1993) seven-step model of genre analysis; and Tribble's (2002) 10-point contextual and linguistic analysis. Strongly based on Swales's and Bhatia's approaches, Tribble presents a 10-step model of genre analysis designed to facilitate the additional use of corpus linguistics in the analysis of the text. Tribble divides his process into

contextual and linguistic analysis. Contextual analysis entails identifying the following: the name of the genre; the social context in which it operates; its communicative purpose; the roles of the participants; shared cultural values of the participants; the text context (i.e., knowledge of related genres); and formal text features. Linguistic analysis involves the identification of lexico-grammatical, textual patterning, and structural features of the genre.

The method of genre analysis used in this investigation integrates and refines the models proposed by Bhatia (1993), Swales (1990), and Tribble (2002). Stage 1, *Contextual Analysis*, seeks to identify the sociocultural, contextual, and situational features of the genre. Specifically, this stage of analysis entails identifying the following:

1. *Name* – The name of the genre as identified by specialist informants and novice discourse community participants.
2. *Discourse Community* – The social context of the discourse community, including formal constraints on the production and reception of texts.
3. *Communicative Purpose* – The purpose of writing the text.
4. *Social Roles* – The roles played by writers and readers of the genre.
5. *Related Genres* – Other genres that may influence or operate in the discourse community.

Stage 2, *Linguistic Analysis*, seeks to identify the linguistic and rhetorical features of the text. In this stage, methods such as corpus linguistic and Swales's (1990) inter/intra genre analysis are used to identify the characteristic lexico-grammatical features, as well as the textual move structure of the genre. Stage 3, *Genre Analysis*, involves interpreting the structural and linguistic features of the text in regards to the sociocultural, situational, and contextual factors that shape

the genre. Figure 3-1 presents an overview of stages of genre analysis as applied to the Thought Essay of the MBA discourse community.

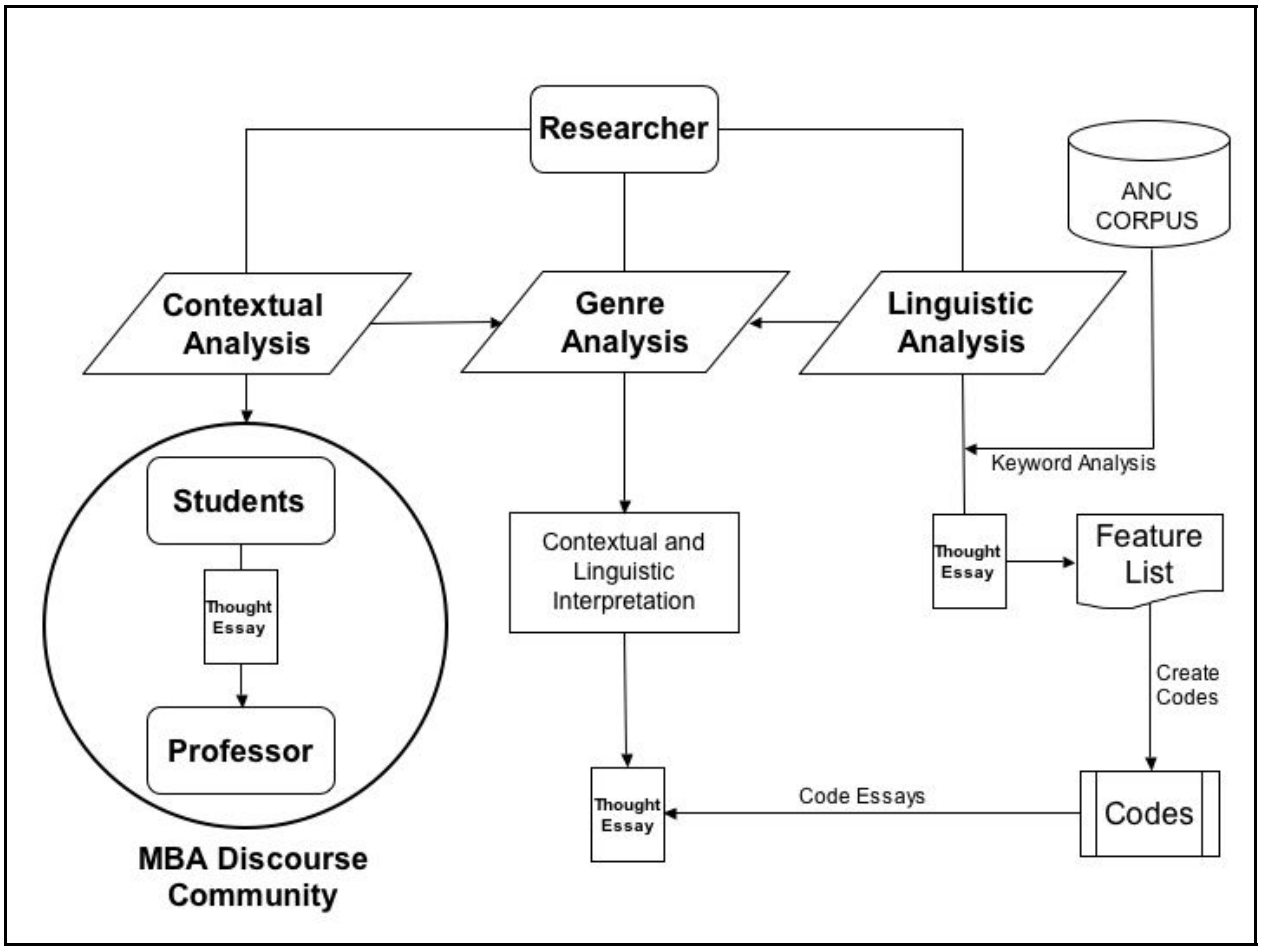

Figure 3-1 Overview of Methods

After identifying the sociocultural and contextual features of the genre, individual Thought Essays were read several times by the researcher. An initial list of genre features was developed, and then confirmed and refined through the inter-genre analysis of course syllabus, readings, and the Executive MBA program website. From this feature list, lexico-grammatical and text

structure codes were developed. Table 3-3 and Table 3-4 provide an overview of the codes used in the analysis of the Thought Essay genre.

Table 3-3 Lexico-Grammatical Codes

Code	Explanation	Example
<CORPORATE_REFERENCE>	An overt reference is made to a corporate entity or business executive.	Examples of this are highly evolved biological processes, symphonies, and more objectively the growth of highly successful organizations in business like **Microsoft** and **Dell**.
<IDIOM>	Idiom, colloquialism, aphorism, etc.	The common analogy of "**if it isn't broke don't fix it**" is often permissive in organizations.
<POPULAR_QUOTE>	Quotation of a famous or popular figure. Includes historical, political, and scientific figures common to popular culture.	"When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" -Job-
<POPULAR_REFERENCE>	A reference to a famous or popular historical figure.	History has shown us that we have had some very good leaders in the vein of **Mahatma Gandhi** and so not so good leaders in the vein of **Adolph Hitler**.
<PROMPT_QUOTE>	Author quotes the prompt in full or part.	In order to understand the statement "tending the commons is the single most important responsibility of leader in an organization" one must ...
<REFERENCE>	An overt reference is made to an academic or business theory, book, or author.	In Fusion Leadership, Daft and Lengel reason that leaders have to be able to bring individuals together in a cordial environment where there are no pre-defined organizational roles.

Table 3-4 Move Structure Codes

Code	Explanation	Example
<DEFINITION>	Author attempts to define some aspect of the Thought Essay prompt.	Organizations are living entities that are composed of a unique blend of individuals that make up the essence of the organization.
<QUESTION>	The authors asks a one or more questions that are later "answered" in the Thought Essay.	Consequently, where does the "commons" fall into this organizational tapestry?
<HYPOTHETICAL>	The author relates a hypothetical situation or scenario.	It was important to me for the "Amazing Solution" to become successful. I built a special team that worked well with each other and all shared with the ideas success.
<OPEN_QUOTE>	Thought Essay is introduced with a quotation. Quotation may occur before the first sentence or in the first sentence.	In contemplating the statement "Tending the commons is the single most important responsibility of a leader in an organization" one is tempted to ...
<PERSONAL_ANECDOTE>	Author of text relates a story based on personal first hand or second hand knowledge. Typically characterized by past tense.	I was at a Christmas party at the home of the first radiologist I had ever worked for. At one point in the evening he pulled me aside and said...
<PROFFER_ADVICE>	Author offers the reader or audience advice. Characterized by words like need, must, and should.	Understanding your strengths and weaknesses creates a great opportunity to grow as an individual and as a leader.
<TAKE_STANCE>	The author takes an overt stance on the Thought Essay prompt. The author disagrees, agrees, conditionally agrees, or agrees in part with the prompt.	With the ever-increasing awareness of contemporary management theories and a company's structural make up I feel that tending the commons is ONE of the most important aspects of a leader's role.

After the coding charts were developed, Thought Essays were individually coded according to the proposed scheme. The following excerpt illustrates the coding procedure:

<DEFINITION> The commons are collective spaces between connecting bodies and minds where patterns can be recognized and organized; agreements can be made and unmade, where creativity, growth and collaboration are possible. The commons is a shared realm where energy is transferred, where we should accept not knowing and strive to explore the unknown. </DEFINITION> Since when have great strides been made on a basis of precise knowing? When <POPULAR_REF> Sir Edmund Hillary </POPULAR_REF> became the first to summit Everest he took a great risk where the outcome was truly unknowable. But he took the opportunity and made it happen because he said, <POPULAR_QUOTE> "it was there" </POPULAR_QUOTE>.

After all texts were coded, lexico-grammatical features were tallied and descriptive statistics generated. Additional pattern searching was used to tally counts of question marks and personal pronouns. Finally, patterns in textual structure were identified and correlations between linguistic features and text assessment were drawn.

Keyword Analysis

In the present study, traditional genre analysis was complemented by the use of corpus linguistics, namely keyword analysis. Keywords are merely statistically significant words that characterize a corpus of text in relation to another larger corpus. They are the important words that lexically differentiate one body of text from another. The rationale behind using keyword analysis is that it can help "direct the researcher to important concepts in a text (in relation to other texts) that may help highlight the existence of types of (embedded) discourse or ideology. Examining how such keywords occur in context and which grammatical categories they appear

in, and looking at their common patterns of co-occurrence should therefore be revealing" (Baker, 2004, p. 347). Keyword analysis has been used with success in Tribble's (2000) comparison of romantic fiction with a larger, more general corpus, and in Xiao and McEnery's (2005) analysis of academic prose.

Through the use of WordSmith Tools 4.0, keyword lists can be generated automatically by choosing a target corpus and a reference corpus. During this process, if a word's frequency in the target corpus is found to be statistically probable in comparison to the reference corpus (as computed by a chi-squared test and a user defined *p*-value), it is considered a keyword (Baker, 2004). According to Scott (2006), WordSmith typically designates three types of words as key: proper nouns, words that characterize a text's "*aboutness*," and high frequency words that are indicators of style or genre. In the present study, Thought Essay micro-corpora were developed for each of the three scoring bands (i.e., poor texts, average texts, and genre exemplar texts) and for the genre as a whole (i.e. all the student essays). The written discourse subset of the American National Corpus 2.0 was then used as a reference corpus for deriving genre keywords.

One of the issues with keyword analysis is that all highly frequent words in the target corpus are tagged as keywords (Baker, 2004). The problem arises when all the occurrences of a given word are relegated to a single text (rather than equally distributed across the texts that comprise the corpus). In other words, the flagged keyword is more representative of a single text rather than the genre as a whole. Take for example a case from the present study. When the Thought Essay micro-corpus was compared with the reference corpus, the term "Smith Brothers Ltd." was flagged as a keyword. Obviously "Smith Brothers Ltd." reflects neither the "aboutness" nor the stylistic characteristics of the Thought Essay genre. Rather, the term was flagged because it happened to be the name of a family business that was frequently mentioned

in a *single* essay. Luckily, WordSmith has a means of dealing with this issue – key keywords. As its name implies, key keywords are merely keywords that are key. In practice, keyword lists can be calculated for each text in a corpus and then compared with each other to determine which of the keywords are key for the corpus as a whole. This was the approach chosen for the present analysis.

Chapter 4: Findings

The data for analysis amounted to 57 Thought Essays assessed by the genre expert on a three-point holistic scale. The findings are presented in the following four sections: Contextual Analysis, Lexico-Grammatical Analysis, Structural Analysis, and Corpus Analysis.

Contextual Analysis

Contextual analysis entailed situating the genre in the social context in which it operates. Specifically, through consultation with the class professor and analysis of course materials, the genre was described in terms of communicative purpose, parent discourse community, participant roles, and related genres. Results of this analysis are presented in Table 4-1.

Table 4-1 Summary of Contextual Analysis

Contextual Analysis	
Name – The name of the genre as identified by members of the discourse community.	Thought Essay – The name of the genre was identified by the genre expert (i.e. the MBA professor). The students themselves use the same name to refer to this genre of texts.
Discourse Community – The social context of the discourse community, including formal constraints on the production and reception of texts.	Graduate academic context in general and an Executive MBA program in specific. Time constraints are imposed on both the writer (3 to 5 weeks to write an essay) and the reader (1 to 2 weeks to read and assess the essay). Writers are additionally constrained by prompt/topic, essay length and formatting conventions.
Communicative Purpose – The purpose of writing the text.	The primary purpose of the Thought Essay is to demonstrate MBA students' (a) graduate level writing ability, (b) knowledge of course content, and (c) "depth of thinking" as a novice member of the discourse community.
Social Roles – The roles played by writers and readers of the genre.	The student's primary role is that of discourse community novice, apprentice, and initiate. The professor's roles include that of teacher, mentor, discourse community expert, and text assessor. The teacher/student role in this context is inherently unequal.
Related Genres – Other genres that may influence or operate in the discourse community.	The Thought Essay, as opposed to other MBA genres such as the business case study, allows the author a fair amount of freedom of expression. Obvious textual influences include MBA textbooks, popular business management and leadership texts, etc. Specific influences include course readings, lectures, and discussions.

Lexico-Grammatical Analysis

For purposes of analysis and discussion, student essays were divided into three categories based on score: Genre Exemplars (GE) scored a 3, Average Texts (AT) scored a 2, and Poor Texts (PT) scored a 1. The distribution of texts across score bands and assignment number[5] are presented in Table 4-2.

Table 4-2 Distribution of Groups by Assignment

	Assignment # 1	Assignment #2	Assignment #3
GE (n=26)	8	8	10
AT (n=18)	6	9	3
PT (n=13)	5	3	5
Total	19	20	18

Table 4-3 presents the seven Thought Essay prompts students could respond to in their three assignments.

Table 4-3 Thought Essay Prompts

Code	Prompt
TENDING	Tending the commons is the single most important responsibility of a leader in an organization
HEALTHY	An organization's success will be largely determined by its capacity to create healthy relationships
ORDER	Organizations would be fundamentally different if we as managers spent our time looking for order rather than looking for control
MEANING	The most powerful attractor in our lives and in organizations is meaning
SOUL	Soul, spirit, and faith are central to organizational leadership
STORIES	Organizational stories define who it is and who it will be
TRUST	Trust is the single most important element of social capital entrusted to organizational leaders

[5] Counts across assignment numbers are not equal because some participants failed or declined in providing the researcher with the assignment.

Table 4-4 illustrates the frequency of prompt type by assignment number. Thought Essay prompts included the following:

Table 4-4 Prompt Type Frequency by Assignment

	Tending	Healthy	Order	Meaning	Soul	Stories	Trust
Assignment #1	19	0	0	0	0	0	0
Assignment #2	0	8	4	6	0	1	1
Assignment #3	0	2	4	0	5	4	3
Total	19	10	8	6	5	5	4

Distribution of scores across prompt type is illustrated in Figure 4-1.

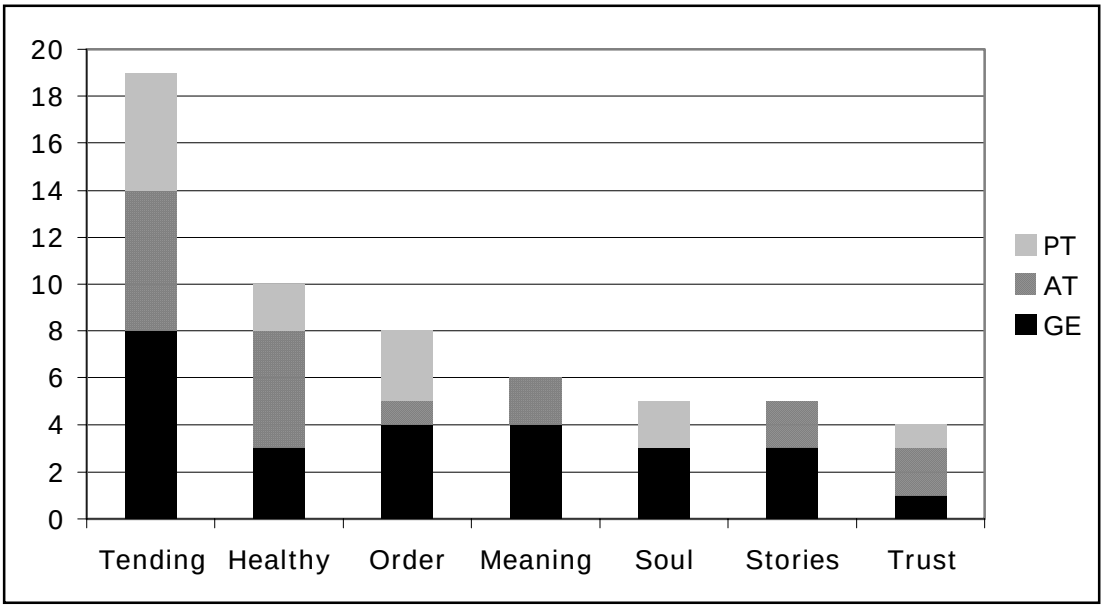

Figure 4-1 Distribution of Groups by Prompt Type

In order to perform a lexico-grammatical analysis of the data, candidate features were inductively and deductively identified by the researcher. These features included: words, paragraphs, pages, opening prompt quotations, references, pop references, corporate references, pop quotations, idioms, first person singular pronouns, second person pronouns, first person plural pronouns, exclamation marks, and question marks. Once these features were identified, individual essays were coded, tallied, and tabulated.

In the initial screening process, data were visually inspected for outliers and normalcy, and independent variables were checked for collinearity. Following Goonatilake and Heredia (forthcoming), simultaneous multiple linear regression was chosen as the preferred statistic. Analysis revealed that number of words, number of references, and number of second person pronouns (2PP) were significant predictors of essay score. Specifically, these three factors explained just under 60% of the observed variance between GE and PT texts in relationship to the independent variable score. Although the other features did not significantly account for variance between groups, in that they remain distinguishing characteristics of the Thought Essay genre, they will be addressed later in the discussion.

Table 4-5 Linear Regression Model

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.785(a)	.616	.583	.616	.616	18.742	3	35	.000

a Predictors: (Constant), 2PP, Ref, Words

Table 4-6 ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	21.366	3	7.122	18.742	.000(a)
	Residual	13.301	35	.380		
	Total	34.667	38			

a Predictors: (Constant), 2PP, Ref, Words
b Dependent Variable: Score

In multiple regression analysis (Table 4-5), number of words, number of references, and number of second person pronouns accounted explained approximately 58% of the variance between groups, leaving the remaining 42% unaccounted for. The ANOVA performed on this model was found to be significant at $p < 0.001$ (Table 4-6).

Significant differences between GE and PT essays

Essay Length

Table 4-7 Number of Words by Group

	Mean	SD	Min	Max
GE (n=26)	1323.46	259.12	735	1799
PT (n=13)	828.54	295.85	500	1602

Essay length (Table 4-7), as expressed by number of words, was a contributing predictor of essay score. In general, the longer the essay, the better the score it received, such that GE > PT. The highly assessed GE essays were observed to be considerably longer than PT essays by an average of approximately 495 words, resulting in a standardized beta coefficient of $\beta = .679$ at $p < .001$.

Reference and Citation

Table 4-8 References By Group

	Mean	SD	Min	Max
GE (n=26)	1.35	1.50	0	4
PT (n=13)	0.15	0.38	0	1

In regards to mean number of overt references and citations (Table 4-8), the data show that GE texts made more references and citations than PT essays. Citations could be internal or external, and reference could be through direct quotation or attributed paraphrase. A typical example is the following: “In reviewing ‘Bowling Alone’ by Robert D. Putnam, it states that social capital is an important component to today’s society because it provides the network and cohesion between groups that helps to facilitate conflict resolution” (J3). Quantitatively, GE

essays (1.15) made nearly four times as many references and citations as PT essays (0.31). The standardized beta coefficient for reference was calculated at $\beta = 0.339$ at $p < .003$.

Second Person Pronouns (2PP)

Table 4-9 Second Person Pronouns by Group

	Mean	SD	Min	Max
GE (n=26)	3.73	6.17	0	24
PT (n=13)	5.23	8.14	0	29

The use of second person pronouns (Table 4-9) was found to be a significant predictor of essay score. The specific second person pronouns examined in this analysis were *you*, *your*, *yourself*, and *yourselves*. The following examples illustrate some common uses of second person pronouns: "I do not want you to think that I regret the launch of the Information Age" (K2); "Can you imagine being so mind numb that you did not pay enough attention that you would let your hands be removed by a stamp?" (A1); and "If you can identify with her story, then I've made my point that meaning is the most powerful attractor" (Q2). A negative correlation was found between the use of second person pronouns and assessment. PT essays (2.46), which used second person pronouns slightly more often than GE texts (2.12), accounted for a standardized beta coefficient of $\beta = -2.178$ at $p < .036$.

Structural Analysis

Structural genre analysis entails describing the "total range of textual structure available within a genre" (Hasan, 1984, p. 79). According to Paltridge (1997), a model of generic textual structure "must specify those elements whose presence appears obligatory to the particular genre, and those elements which appear optional for the particular genre, as well as the ordering of the

elements in relation to each other… the analysis should, thus, demonstrate what elements *must* occur; what elements *can* occur; where elements *must* occur; where elements *can* occur; and *how often* elements can occur" (p. 66).

In order to determine the prototypical organizational move structure of the Thought Essay genre, GE texts were structurally coded and analyzed. As the genre exhibited no overt section markers (such as the Methods and Discussion sections in a social science research article), essays were explicitly divided into three sections for purposes of analysis: the *introduction* included the first paragraph of the text as well as any opening quote or prompt; the *conclusion* included the final paragraph of the essay; and the *body*, consisted of everything between the introduction and the conclusion. Table 4-10 illustrates the mean percentages of texts that took a move within the given section. The labels on this table refer to the move structure codes presented in Table 3-4 in the previous chapter.

Table 4-10 Structural Moves by Group

	Prompt Quote	Definition	Take Stance	Definition	Proffer Advice	Personal Anecdote	Take Stance	Proffer Advice
GE	58%	38%	50%	38%	54%	50%	77%	50%
PT	85%	23%	46%	46%	38%	31%	54%	62%
	Introduction			**Body**			**Conclusion**	

In the introduction, 15 of the 26 GE texts (58%) quoted the essay prompt as an initial move. Of the GE texts, 13 (50%) took an overt stance on the Thought Essay prompt somewhere in the introductory paragraph. Ten of the texts (39%) used the introduction to define terms relating to the essay prompt. The body of GE texts evidenced no preference for move order. Proffering advice was the most frequent move in GE texts, being found in 15 of the essays

(58%). The second most common move was relating a personal anecdote by illustrating a point with a personal experience. Thirteen of the GE texts (50%) used the body of the essay to relate a personal anecdote. Defining the terms of the prompt occurred in 10 of the essays (39%). The conclusion, as with the body, demonstrated no preferential order for rhetorical moves. 20 of the GE texts (77%), used the conclusion to take or reassert a stance taken on the essay prompt. Proffering advice was found in 13 (50%) of GE conclusions.

Although the move structure of exemplar texts ideally defines the prototypical move structure of the genre, for comparative purposes, the move structure of PT essays was also analyzed. Of the PT essays, 11 out of 13 (85%) quoted the essay prompt as the first move in the introduction, whereas 3 of the texts (23%) used the introductory paragraph to define terms, six (46%) used the introduction to take an explicit stance on the essay prompt. In the body, 6 of the PT essays (46%) defined terms; 5 (38%) proffered advice; and 4 (31%) related a personal anecdote. In the conclusion, 7 of the 13 PT essays (54%) took or retook a stance on the prompt, whereas 8 of the texts (62%) proffered advice.

In terms of rhetorical organization, GE texts were more likely to: define terminology in the introduction, proffer advice and relate personal anecdote in the body, and take to a stance in the conclusion. The poorly assessed PT texts, on the other hand, were more likely to quote the prompt in the introduction and proffer advice in the conclusion. Nearly equal percentages of GE and PT essays took a stance in the introduction and defined terms in the body. Taken as a whole, the genre was found to exhibit a wide degree of structural variation characterized by repetition and lack of obligatory rhetorical moves.

Corpus Analysis

The corpus-based analysis of Thought Essay texts was based on Tribble's (2000, 2002) keyword macro/micro approach to genre analysis. In this approach a smaller target corpus is compared with a larger reference corpus in order to identify the statistically significant keywords of a genre. In the present study, student essays were first saved as raw text files before being loaded into WordSmith Tools. Here, the Wordlist program was used to create word frequency lists for each file. Next, the keyword utility was used to generate keyword lists by comparing Thought Essay word lists with the larger reference corpus, the American National Corpus. Key keywords (i.e. words that are key for the genre, but not specific to a single text) were then computed. By comparing text keyword lists among each other, key keywords were created for the scoring groups and the genre as a whole.

Key Keywords by Group

Table 4-11 lists the top ten key keywords for the GE and PT texts. The table also shows the number of and percentage of texts in which the identified word is a keyword.

Table 4-11 Key Keywords By Group

#	GE Key Keywords	Texts	%	PT Key Keywords	Texts	%
1	ORGANIZATION	14	60	ORGANIZATION	9	75
2	LEADER	9	39	COMMONS	5	41
3	ORGANIZATIONS	8	34	ORGANIZATIONS	5	41
4	RELATIONSHIPS	6	26	LEADER	4	33
5	COMMONS	5	21	RELATIONSHIPS	4	33
6	EMPLOYEES	5	21	LEADERS	3	25
7	INDIVIDUALS	5	21	ORGANIZATIONAL	3	25
8	LEADERS	5	21	TENDING	3	25
9	I	4	17	AND	2	16
10	LEADERSHIP	4	17	ENVIRONMENT	2	16

Six of the top ten words are common to both the GE and PT groups. Of the remain four words in the PT list, three of them (i.e., *TENDING*, *ENVIRONMENT* and *AND*) occurred in the GE list at position numbers 12, 14, and 16 respectively.

Key Keywords by Genre

Key keywords were also generated for the genre as a whole by analyzing GE, AT, and PT texts in relation to each other and the reference corpus. Following, Baker (2004), two cutoff points were set: $p < 0.000001$ and percent text coverage $\geq 6\%$. As approximately 50% of the first sixty words were prompt words, these were removed from the list. The remaining 19 words which fit the criteria are presented in Table 4-12.

Table 4-12 Key Keywords of the Thought Essay Genre

#	Key Keywords	Texts	%	#	Key Keywords	Texts	%
1	EMPLOYEES	10	20	11	MUST	4	8
2	INDIVIDUALS	9	18	12	MY	4	8
3	ENVIRONMENT	8	16	13	WILL	4	8
4	OUR	8	16	14	WORK	4	8
5	AND	7	14	15	COMPANY	3	6
6	I	7	14	16	GOALS	3	6
7	COMMUNICATION	6	12	17	PURPOSE	3	6
8	TEAM	6	12	18	THIS	3	6
9	STAFF	5	10	19	VISION	3	6
10	WE	5	10				

Of the 19 identified key keywords of the genre, 11 (58%) are nouns typically associated with business and management and reflect the "aboutness" of the Thought Essay genre. Of the

remaining words, 4 (21%) are the first person pronouns *OUR*, *I*, *WE*, and *MY*. Rounding off the list are the conjunction *AND*, the modals *MUST* and *WILL*, and the demonstrative *THIS*.

In summary, contextual analysis revealed the Thought Essay as a highly-localized, occluded classroom genre. Specifically, the Thought Essay was found to operate as a pedagogical genre between teacher and student in a small, local university-level discourse community. As such, the communicative functions of this genre include reflecting graduate level writing ability, knowledge of course content, and "depth of thinking." Quantitative lexico-grammatical analysis revealed that GE texts statistically differ from PT texts along three factors: essay length, number of references, and second person pronoun frequency. Structural analysis indicated both organizational similarities and differences between GE and PT essays. Although the two essay groups shared similar move structures, quantifiable differences were observed in prompt quoting, stance taking, personal anecdote, and advice proffering. Finally, corpus analysis revealed no discernable keyword differences between the two groups. Rather, it showed that the Thought Essay genre, when compared to a subset of the American National Corpus, is characterized by terms that reflect its "aboutness" and style.

Chapter 5: Discussion

As noted by Bhatia (1993), Swales (1990), and Tribble (2002), one of the aims of genre analysis is to interpret the structural and linguistic features of the genre in regards to the sociocultural, situational, and contextual factors that influence it. To this end, the following discussion is divided into two sections – structural features and lexico-grammatical features. In each section the findings are interpreted according to the sociocultural and contextual factors that constrain the genre.

Structural Features

The prototypical structure of the Thought Essay genre was constructed by analyzing the most frequently observed rhetorical moves. As the GE texts are exemplars of the genre, they formed the basis of this analysis. Specifically, if 50% or more of the GE texts exhibited a particular move, the move was included in the model (Table 5-1).

Table 5-1 Prototypical Move Structure

Section	#	Move	Repeatable
Introduction	1	Prompt Quote	
	2	Take Stance	
Body	3a	Proffer Advice	X
	3b	Personal Anecdote	X
Conclusion	4a	Take Stance	
	4b	Proffer Advice	

Overview of Move Structure

GE texts were characterized by four rhetorical moves: *Prompt Quote*, *Take Stance*, *Personal Anecdote*, and *Proffer Advice*. The *Prompt Quote* was the most common move of the genre. In the introduction, the Thought Essay prompt is quoted in one of two positions: immediately before the first paragraph or embedded in the first sentence of the introductory

paragraph. In this prominent position, the quoted prompt primarily functions as a focus for the essay – a signal to the reader indicating what the essay is about. *Take Stance* was found to be an optional move in which the author takes an overt stance on the Thought Essay prompt. In taking a stance, the author can agree, disagree, conditionally agree, or agree in part with the prompt. While taking a stance in the introduction functions as a thesis statement, in the conclusion in serves to reassert the author's opinion on the subject. *Proffer Advice* is found in both the body and the conclusion of the Thought Essay genre. It is optional in both positions, but in the body it can be repeated. In this move, business or leadership advice is offered to the reader or audience. *Personal Anecdote* is an optional move in the body of the Thought Essay in which the author relates a personal anecdote or illustrates a point through personal example or narrative.

Variation in Move Structure

As noted in the findings, only slight organizational differences were observed between GE and PT essays (Figure 5-1). Of specific interest are the three moves that differed by approximately 20% or more: *prompt quote* (introduction), *personal anecdote* (body), and *take stance* (conclusion).

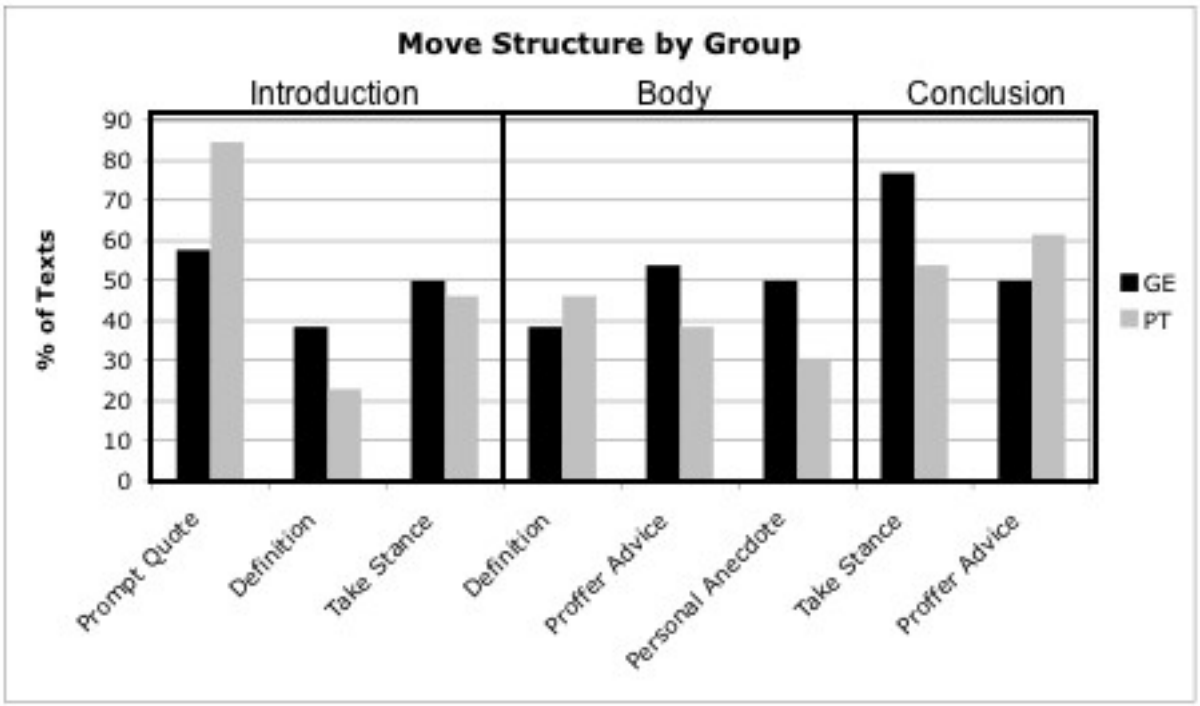

Figure 5-1 Move Structure by Group

Prompt Quote

It was found that poorly assessed PT essays tended to quote the prompt more frequently than the highly assessed GE texts. Whereas 85% of PT texts quote the prompt as an opening move, only 58% of the GE texts did. The dual question arises as to why a clear majority of PT authors chose to quote the Thought Essay prompt as an introductory move, whereas GE authors did not feel as compelled to make the same move? Although it is difficult to answer this question without personal interviews or think aloud protocols, two possible candidates emerge. The first has to do with essay length. Namely, the PT authors may have used the prompt quote as a means of "filling up space" to create the illusion of a longer text. Similar to modifying font size and margins to create the appearance of a longer text, 4 of the 13 PT texts (31%) were additionally found to have used full line breaks between paragraphs. Moreover, these texts were found to

have an inordinate number of paragraphs (between 7 and 11) , with an average density of less than 100 words per paragraph. On the other hand, GE authors were more likely to be constrained in the opposite direction. The average length of GE essays was 4.7 pages, just under the 5 page maximum dictated in the course syllabus, accounting for a density of approximately 150 words per paragraph. The GE essays that quoted the prompt had an average length of 1,265 words. The GE essays that *did not* quote the prompt averaged 1,418 words. This suggests that some GE authors refrained from quoting the essay prompt in order to keep to the prescribed page length.

The second explanation of prompt quote differences concerns the writing ability and rhetorical resources of individual authors. Across all essays, the prompt quote (when it was found) was invariably used as a rhetorical entry point for framing the following argument or discussion. This was true for PT and GE essays alike. However, the single PT essay that did not quote the prompt as an opening move, did quote the prompt while taking a stance in the final sentence of the introductory paragraph. GE texts, on the other hand, exhibited greater variety in introductory rhetorical features. Four of the GE texts, for example, chose to introduce their essays with a famous quotation, which functioned as a springboard for further discussion and exploration of the topic. An additional three GE texts skipped a traditional introduction altogether and moved straight into a personal anecdote or hypothetical scenario. Take for example the following except from a GE essay:

> The night was cold and quiet. There were four of us on the graveyard shift at Fire Station #9. Two were watching TV, one was cleaning the kitchen, and I was walking around bored, talking to myself. (F2)

The author of this text uses the introduction to pull the reader directly into the scenario. As the essay unfolds, the author draws parallels and contrasts between the hero of the story and the "typical" employee of a corporation. Still another GE essay uses the introduction to place the reader directly into a hypothetical scenario – being awarded the position of CEO. Yet another GE essay uses the introduction to talk about shared childhood stories such as "The Boy who Cried Wolf" and "Curious George," which is then used as a rhetorical segue into discussing the essay prompt (i.e. organizational stories). As evidenced by these observations, it appears likely that GE authors have more rhetorical and stylistic resources than their poorly assessed peers who tend to rely on more traditionally formulaic approaches to argumentation.

Personal Anecdote

In the Thought Essay body, the most striking structural difference between GE and PT texts was the use of personal anecdote. Whereas at least one example of personal anecdote is found in 50% of the GE texts, only 31% of PT texts exhibit this characteristic. Moreover, the way in which GE and PT texts used personal anecdote and illustration was noticeably different. PT anecdotes were both shorter in length and less detailed than their GE counterparts. Take for example, the following:

> In my own professional career, I have been motivated to remain in positions that are difficult and time-consuming solely because of the relationships I have had with my co-workers. My direct bosses have "tended the commons", inspiring my loyalty to boss and company. Also, in my experience, I have worked for managers who do not "tend the commons". (L1)

This PT excerpt, though relating a personal experience, does so in the vaguest of manners. It is characterized by a noticeable lack of personal details. The reader is left wondering what professional career? What type of relationship with coworkers? What exactly did the managers do? On the other hand, the GE essays that used personal anecdote, provided much more personal detail than the PT texts. Contrast the previous example with the following:

> For example, I started my time in the USAF working in the inpatient pharmacy of the base hospital where I was stationed. This particular hospital is the USAF's largest medical facility. So, it goes without saying that it also had the most "brass" and arguably the highest degree of bureaucracy. (C2)

Here the author uses personal anecdote to illustrate different types of corporate culture and the personal relationships they engender. Whereas the PT author used only a few sentences to relate a personal experience, the GE author of this text continued with the anecdote for several paragraphs, comparing and contrasting a number of different corporate cultures. In sharp contrast to the PT anecdote, the personal details of this anecdote help serve as a rhetorical hook to engage the audience in the discussion.

The use of personal anecdote can be explained in part by the formal constraints on the genre and the literacy socialization promoted through primary course texts. According to the course syllabus, essays should use "narrative or argument… [that] provides background or uses other devices to stimulate interest in the subject and provide a direction for the essay." Further, essays should reflect "a writer interested and connected to the topic… [and] demonstrate a unique approach to the topic." The use of personal anecdote is one means of achieving these rhetorical goals. Moreover, the use of anecdote has precedence in the primary course literature.

Bolman and Deal (1997), for example, open their discussion on corporate organization by narrating the tragic story of Korean Air flight 007. Jaworski (1998), on the other hand, uses narrative to relate his personal experience with the Watergate scandal. Additional examples of personal anecdote can be found in Wheatley (2001). These three texts which formed the core content knowledge of the course help function as agents of socialization by providing novice students with models of appropriate discourse convention.

Take Stance

In the Thought Essay conclusion, the greatest structural difference between GE and PT texts was taking a stance – a move that entails asserting or reasserting a personal position on the prompt. Whereas 77% of GE texts took an overt stance in the conclusion, just over half (54%) of the PT texts did. As with the other structural and lexico-grammatical characteristics of the genre, formal constraints help explain this feature. According to the course syllabus, the concluding paragraph of the Thought Essay "logically completes the development of the thesis or builds to the main point of the essay." The fact that more GE authors took an overt stance in the conclusion, may coincide with greater familiarity and mastery of the five paragraph essay – a genre commonly encountered in undergraduate academic settings. Structurally, the idealized five paragraph essay is characterized by an introductory paragraph that presents the thesis statement; three body paragraphs which provide examples or ideas that support the thesis statement; and a conclusion that summarizes the supporting points and restates the thesis. By taking a stance in the introduction and then reasserting it in the concluding paragraph, it seems probable that student authors are relying upon previously learned discourse conventions to structure their Thought Essays.

Proffer Advice

One of the unique rhetorical features of the Thought Essay genre is proffering advice. Characterized by modals of necessity (e.g. *must* and *should*, and the phrasal modal *need*), evidence of advice proffering was found in 72% all Thought Essays. Interestingly, this move does not appear to directly serve any of the communicative purposes of the Thought Essay genre. Namely, advice proffering is not a direct reflection of graduate level writing ability, knowledge of course content, nor "depth of thinking." Neither does advice proffering appear to be the result of formal assessment constraints. Rather, students seem to be following some of the rhetorical conventions found in their course readings. Course texts such as Bolman and Deal (1997), Jaworski (1998), and Wheatley (2001) all proffer advice to the aspiring or practicing business leader. Moreover, this convention enables students and their texts to project an identity of authority and leadership. Examine the following excerpt, for example:

> How as leaders do we ensure that our greatest efforts are put forth into the tending of the soil to ensure that the commons are fertile? We must strive to create an environment that guarantees each individual a high degree of safety where the qualities of caring, listening, consideration, and hope are given a very high value. (S1)

In the first sentence, by using the first person plural pronoun *we*, the author both stakes a claim as a business leader and addresses the audience (i.e., the professor and class peers) as a social equal. As a rhetorical device, proffering advice functions in this genre as a mechanism of identity projection and social claim staking in the MBA discourse community.

Variation in Structure

Although there were noticeable qualitative and quantitative structural differences between the groups, there were also commonalities that characterize the genre as a whole. Of immediate note is the high degree of rhetorical variation and lack of obligatory moves in the genre. This stands in distinction to well-established genres that require almost formulaic structural organization (e.g., the research article, the dissertation, the five paragraph essay). Why then do, Thought Essays fail to exhibit structural obligation? Three possible explanations emerge: genre flexibility, novice authors, and genre immaturity. First, the genre itself is flexible. The Thought Essay is characterized in part by what Biber (1988) calls "involved production" – discourse that is primarily affective and interactive in nature. Examples that score high in this dimension include face-to-face conversation, impromptu speeches, and personal letters, all discourses that exhibit a high degree of rhetorical flexibility. As a type of involved production, one would expect a greater degree of structural variation to be found in Thought Essays. Second, the authors of these essays were all novice members of the discourse community who came from a wide variety of linguistic, cultural, educational, and occupational backgrounds. Students wrote these essays in their first semester of the executive MBA program. Whereas "specialist writers seem to be fairly consistent in the way they organize their overall message in a particular genre" (Swales, 1990, p. 29), this does not necessarily hold true for novice writers. As an occluded genre, students had no prior genre knowledge or experience they could rely on when constructing their texts. Rather, students appear to rely on a variety of other genres as structural models for their essays. Finally, the genre itself is highly localized and immature. The executive MBA program is less than ten years old and the Thought Essay has only been used in it for the past eight years. As a newly developing genre, the Thought Essay is experiencing a period of

linguistic flux. Whereas more established genres have evolved specific lexico-grammatical and structural features to meet the communicative needs of the members of its discourse community, the Thought Essay remains a nascent genre characterized by a high degree of variation. This is in line with Swales (2004) observation that many academic genres are in a "state of considerable flux" (p. 11). The structural and stylistic stability of the genre is further attenuated because of the rapid turnover in discourse community membership. Specifically, as the executive MBA program is a mere 21 months in length, every two years there is a completely new group of students in the program. Moreover, the Thought Essay genre is introduced and confined to a single one-semester course in organizational behavior. Coupled with genre nascency, discourse community instability and membership turnover help explain the high degree of variation observed in Thought Essays.

Lexico-Grammatical Features

In addition to structural similarities and differences, Thought Essays were found to significantly vary by group across three factors: essay length, use of reference and citation, and number of second person pronouns.

Essay Length

The length of Thought Essays, as calculated by number of words, strongly correlates with positive assessment, and was a significantly contributing factor in accounting for the observed variance between GE and PT texts. Specifically, the longer the essay was, the better the score it received, such that on average, the difference between GE and PT texts was nearly 500 words. The positive correlation between length and assessment is in line with other studies. Watanabe

(2001), for example, found that highly assessed international graduate student essays were characterized by clear introductions, multiple source citations, concluding paragraphs, and "sufficient length overall." Milanovic, Saville, and Shen (1996) found that length, in addition to factors such as vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation affected rater assessment of EFL student texts. Studying the use of redundancy in college student essays, Karasawa (2001) found that non-native English speaker texts were significantly longer and nearly twice as redundant as their native speaker counterparts. The exception, however, was the "relative terseness" characteristic of the Hindi/Urdu L1 essays. In the present study, although 3 of the 5 most poorly assessed students were non-native English speakers, two them were Telugu/Hindi L1 speakers, which suggests further investigation is needed into the possibility of rhetorical transfer.

Although the course syllabus mentioned no minimum page length, it did state that essays should be no "more than 5 pages" in length. Rather than a maximum limit however, the 5-page number appears to be more of a benchmark, or an appropriate length students should strive for when writing their essays. Anything much less than that would appear to hinder the communicative purpose of the genre – namely to reflect knowledge of course content and "depth of thinking" as an aspiring member of the MBA discourse community.

Reference and Citation

As the findings indicate, the use of citation and reference in Thought Essays correlates with high assessment. Number of references and citations made to academic/business theories, books, or authors, significantly contributed to the observed variance between GE and PT texts. On average, the GE texts made 9 times the number of overt references than PT essays. Whereas only 2 of the 13 PT essays (13%) cited sources, 15 of the 26 GE texts (58%) made overt

references to business authorities. This positive correlation between reference and assessment is in line with Watanabe (2001), who found that texts whose arguments were supported by cited sources and references received higher marks.

Additional qualitative analysis of reference use shows a striking difference between the GE and PT texts. The following two excerpts are typical of the references found in the highly assessed GE texts:

> Q1: As Robert Lengel outlines in his book, Fusion Leadership, researchers have discovered that many underlying feelings typically exist in American team members.

> X3: Putnam refers to social capital as "connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them". In that sense social capital is closely related to what some have called "civic virtue." The difference is…

Both GE examples are similar to the reference conventions characteristic of academic writing in general. In Q1, for example, the author uses citation to credit the source of the following "facts." The reference in X3, on the other hand, uses direct quotation in order to define key terminology in the essay. In both texts, the authors use reference as a rhetorical springboard for further discussion. Whereas Q1 uses reference as a platform for enumerating the characteristics of the typical American employee, X3 uses reference as an entry point for discussing the differences between social capital and civic virtue. Although formal citation methods, such as those prescribed by MLA and APA are conspicuously missing from Thought Essay texts, the GE texts tend to use reference in ways typical of academic discourse.

In the PT essays there were only two occurrences of reference, both of which deviated from typical academic use.

> G3: When Leading with Soul first appeared, it was part of a tiny trickle of books addressing spirituality at work.

> B1: As leaders we need to learn how to work with these premises and guide the organizations toward a "living systems" as Wheatley defines in her book Leadership and the new science.

Whereas GE references were found in a variety of positions, both cases of PT reference occurred in the last sentence of a paragraph. The author of G3 appears to be using the reference in a traditional manner – namely source attribution of the previous discussion. The manner in which G3 goes about this, however, seems backward – rather than using reference as entry point into discussion, the author waits until the very end of preceding argument to attribute the source. In B1, on the other hand, reference is used to attribute a term to its author. However, rather than using reference as a springboard for defining the term (like in the GE example), the author leaves the reader wondering just exactly what is a "living system." Although both PT essays use reference in academically standard ways (i.e., attribution of an idea or term to its author), the manner in which they go about this deviates significantly from the GE texts.

The positive relationship between reference and assessment can be understood, in part, by the communicative purpose of the genre – to demonstrate knowledge of course content. According to the course syllabus, Thought Essays should show "knowledge about the topic through the use of specific, accurate, and up-to-date information and/or examples." Citing business authorities, and referring to contemporary business theory, is one means by which MBA

students demonstrate mastery of disciplinary knowledge. In essence, citation and reference functions as a form of knowledge-display which novice students use as they attempt to negotiate their identities as legitimate members of the discourse community. Furthermore, reference is used in exemplar texts as a rhetorical device by which to expand arguments, explore ideas, and enumerate the key concepts and terminology of a source.

Undoubtedly contributing to the wide variation of citation conventions encountered in the essays, students had not been provided with explicit citation guidelines. Rather, students appear to be both relying on previously learned conventions and modeling their citations based on course materials. In this sense, course textbooks and readings appear to act as mechanisms of literacy socialization for the novice MBA discourse members. Course texts, such as Bolman and Deal (1997), Jaworski (1998), and Wheatley (2001), provide students with ample evidence of citation and reference practices. Likely, one of the very first genres that students encounter as novice members of an academic discourse community is the course syllabus. Throughout the Organizational Behavior syllabus, for example, numerous references and quotations of key business thinkers are made, providing a model for student discourse.

Second Person Pronouns

The use of second person pronouns was found to negatively correlate with text assessment. Specifically, the lower scoring PT essays tended to use more second person pronouns than the higher scoring GE texts. According to Biber (1988), second person pronouns "indicate a high degree of involvement with the addressee" (p. 225) and are characteristic of involved production. Academic discourse, on the other hand, aligns strongly with the informational production, and rarely features second person pronouns. In this aspect, the

Thought Essay genre shares some characteristics with academic writing in general, and likely accounts for the negative correlation between second person pronouns and assessment. Furthermore, the avoidance of second person plurals in academic writing is a prescriptive norm of the profession that is typically taught in freshman composition courses.

Additional qualitative analysis reveals differences in the manner second person pronouns are used in PT and GE texts. Take, for example, the following excerpt from a PT essay:

> The basic point is simple, as a manager you need friends and allies to get things done. To get the support of others, managers need to cultivate their relationships. One may think, why does one need to play political games to get others to work and do the things you as a manager has asked of them? Whether we like it or not… (R2)

In this excerpt, the author is proffering advice to the reader – a structural move characteristic of the Thought Essay genre. However, in the space of just a few sentences, the author shifts from the second person pronoun *you*, to managers in general, to the formal, general third person pronoun *one*, back to the second person *you*, and concludes with the first person plural pronoun *we*. The constant shifting of pronouns, results in an ambiguous reference to the reader and violates prescriptive norms of writing.

High assessed GE texts, on other hand tended to use fewer second person pronouns. When they were used, however, they tended to follow prescriptive conventions. Compare R2 above with the following GE excerpt:

> That is, if you as a leader are willing to make it your number one priority to view your first bottom line as the care and feeding of your people and

> the relationships that exist between the members of the organizations, you can with some certainty ensure the new second bottom line will take care of itself. (S1)

Here, as with the preceding example, the author is proffering advice to the reader. However, the author of this GE text, in exhibiting control over pronoun usage maintains a clear and unambiguous reference to the reader. GE texts were also observed to exhibit greater functional uses of second person pronouns:

> X1: Let's say that you applied for the position of CEO with a company, went through the interview process and were awarded the position. You are excited about this new leadership opportunity and connected with the company's values during the process. You report to work on your first day…
>
> F1: "Why are you guys here so early?"

Several GE texts, such as X1 above, make use of second person pronouns in order to relate a hypothetical scenario. In other texts, such as F1, second person pronouns occur in conversational dialog, a feature conspicuously absent from PT essays. In sum, GE texts exhibited less frequent use of second person pronouns, but when they were used, they tended to serve a rhetorical function and were used correctly.

Additional Features of the Genre

Although GE and PT texts only differed significantly along factors of length, reference, and second person pronouns, a number of lexico-grammatical features characterize the genre as a

whole. Examining the entire corpus of 57 Thought Essays through genre analysis and keyword analysis, a number of characteristic features were identified: questions, popular reference and quotation, first person pronouns, and modals.

Use of Questions

Although questions did not significantly contribute to differences between groups, there were noticeable quantitative differences between GE and PT texts. As illustrated in Table 5-2, GE texts, on average, used questions more than 4 times the amount in PT texts. Whereas, only 5 out of the 13 PT essays (39%) used overt questions, 24 of the 26 GE texts (92%) used questions.

Table 5-2 Questions by Group

	Mean	SD	Min	Max
GE (n=26)	5.37	4.77	0	23
PT (n=13)	1.23	1.79	0	5

The fact that questions were not a significant predictor of essay assessment is of interest in that questions appear to be a formal constraint of the genre. As the course syllabus states, one of the criteria upon which Thought Essays are assessed is formation of "questions that might further the exploration of the issues reflected by the statement."

Although differences between groups were not significant, questions appear to be a salient feature of the genre as a whole. As opposed the low occurrence of overt question markers in other graduate-level disciplinary genres (with the exception of research questions), this feature is abundant in the Thought Essay genre. As odd as this feature might appear to experts of other academic disciplines, the use of overt question markers has precedent in the MBA community. A

review of several course texts revealed a generous use of this convention. In one of numerous cases, Margaret Wheatley (2001) questions, "What is it that the streams can teach me about organizations?" (p. 17) and, later, "Fear that is everywhere must come to us from somewhere. But where?" (p. 19). Wheatley, as with Bolman and Deal (1997) and Jaworksy (1998), primarily uses questioning as a rhetorical device for argument development. Rhetorical questions are typically used by these authors as either a method of introducing discourse into a subject or as *anthypophora* (i.e. reasoning aloud by asking a question and then immediately answering it).

Interestingly, qualitative analysis revealed no appreciable differences in the manner that GE and PT texts used questions. Specifically, both groups used questions for rhetorical purposes similar to the business authors previously mentioned. Take, for example, the following excerpt from a poorly assessed PT essay:

> This leads me to a series of question [*sic*]: How does an organization get from where it is to where it wants to be? Are refined methods and controlled processes enough to generate success? What is the key contributor to an organizations [*sic*] success? I do not think the answer lies in something written in a rule book or inscribed on a piece of art work hanging on the wall; the answer is in the people and the relationships that join them together to form an organization. I propose… (E3)

Taken from the introductory paragraph, this passage illustrates how the author makes use of questions as a rhetorical device to frame the rest of the argument. Specifically, the enumeration of questions acts as a springboard for discussing how "healthy relationships" contribute to a company's success. Although both PT and GE texts used questions in a similar fashion, the GE texts exhibited greater rhetorical variety. Take for example, the following passage:

> As I tried the office door, it was locked. I heard the beeping of the alarm system. There was a little flashing red light which indicated "door was locked". Where was everybody? I peered through the front window and saw the security guard walking down the hall. I know the security guard saw me. Does the security guard know of the project deadlines this week? (F1)

In this excerpt, the author of this GE text relates a hypothetical personal anecdote to the reader. Through the use of questions and out loud thinking, the author adds a personal dimension to the essay that serves to engage the reader in the argument. By contrasting this ideal hypothetical scenario with actuality, the author appeals to a shared sense of camaraderie with the reader, by relating the common place problems of the business world.

Popular Quote and Reference

Although no significant correlation was found between assessment and popular quote and reference, both quantitative and qualitative differences were observed. As shown in Table 5-3, GE texts on average used popular quote and reference nearly 6 times as often as PT essays.

Table 5-3 Popular Quote & Reference by Group

	Mean	SD	Min	Max
GE (n=26)	0.88	1.07	0	4
PT (n=13)	0.15	0.55	0	2

Whereas 14 of the 26 exemplar essays (54%) used popular quote or reference, only 1 of the 13 PT texts did. Moreover, the one PT essay that did make reference to a popular historical figure, did so in a superficial manner. Specifically, the author of the PT text made a fleeting one sentence reference to Gandhi and Alexander as examples of leaders who gained the trust of the populace. This is in sharp contrast to the manner in which GE texts make use of popular quote and reference. Take, for example, the following excerpt:

> Spirit has been a challenge to define and explain throughout history. In the Bible, the very essence of a person was called their spirit or "pneuma", literally their breath. Jesus described the spirit in terms of the wind; that it "blows where it wishes, and you can hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes." And so it is for leaders that reject the notion that all is concrete. (Q3)

In this passage, the author does not merely make reference to a popular figure, but rather uses quotation and reference as a rhetorical device for explaining the importance of "spirit" in organizational leadership. In addition to its use as a rhetorical device popular quote and reference helps lend authority to student Thought Essays. Moreover, it helps reflect "depth of thinking" by providing students a means of critically linking business theory with real world experience. Take, for instance, the following passage from a GE essay. The essay opens with a quote from William James:

> "I am done with great things, great institutions and big success, and I am for those tiny invisible molecular moral forces that work from individual to individual by creeping through the crannies of the world like so many

> rootlets, or like the capillary oozing of water, yet which, if you give them time, will rend the hardest monuments of man's pride." (H1)

The author, many pages later in the conclusion, craftily ties this quotation to questions about his own business and ability as a leader:

> If the commons is the most important job for a leader, will I be able to find the pulse of my organization and navigate its "rootlets and capillaries" and tend to them? Will I have the strength to tap into the "moral forces" at work in myself, to uphold and emanate the vision, values and morals that I feed to the soil? (H1)

As a rhetorical device, in addition to lending essays an authoritative voice, popular quote and reference can provide coherence and cohesion to help tie together business theory and real world practice.

Precedent for popular quotation and reference can be found in numerous genres of the MBA discourse community. Textbook authors tend to use quotation as a rhetorical device and as a means of strengthening arguments. Wheatley (2001), for example, quotes Yeats – "Things fall apart; the center cannot hold, mere anarchy is loosed upon the world" – as a segue into her discussion of chaos theory. This lexico-grammatical feature is additionally abundant on the MBA program website, which quotes popular figures such as Robert Frost and Immanuel Kant. As such, course materials appear to function as agents of discourse community socialization by providing students with models for their own essays.

First Person Pronouns and Modals

When compared to other academic genres, one of the most striking features of the Thought Essay is the use of personal voice. Specifically, the genre is characterized by abundant use of first person singular and plural pronouns. As revealed through keyword analysis, the first person pronouns *OUR*, *I*, *WE*, and *MY* were found to be statistically significant indicators of the genre. According to Biber (1988), first person pronouns mark ego-involvement in a text and "indicate an interpersonal focus and a generally involved style" (p. 225). This feature of personal voice can be explained in part by the formal constraints on the genre. According to the Thought Essay rubric provided in the course syllabus, voice plays an important role in the assessment of texts. Specifically, "*writer's thoughts*, *personal interpretations* of issues, and *personality* are evident in the writing; an integrated view of the topic in the *writer's own words and style* [emphasis added]." As with many of the features of the Thought Essay genre, examples can be found in the primary socialization texts of the community. Whereas the use of first person plural pronouns is the most evident in Bolman and Deal (1997), Wheatley (2001) and Jaworski (1998) make liberal use of first person singular pronouns in crafting their texts.

In addition to keyword analysis, WordSmith was also used to create and analyze concordance lists for GE texts, PT texts, and the Thought Essay genre as a whole (i.e. PT, AT, and GE texts). In regards to first person singular pronouns, no obvious differences in usage patterns were revealed between GE and PT texts. However, when analyzed as a whole, an identifiable pattern emerged. Namely, first person pronouns were found to collocate with private verbs – a class of verbs "used for the overt expression of private attitudes, thoughts, and emotions" (Biber, 1998, p.105). In terms of relative frequency, the following private verbs were found to collocate (immediately) with first person singular pronouns: *BELIEVE*, *THINK*,

THOUGHT, *FIND*, *KNOW*, *FEEL*, *FOUND*, *HEARD*, and *LEARNED*. The following lines illustrate some typical uses of this pattern (i.e. first person pronoun + private verb):

> **I believe** relationships are a key ingredient to establishing order... (R2)
> **I believe** leaders should facilitate this process but … (K1)
> The key to this, **I feel**, is that if a leader wants to promote free thinking… (T1)
> **I think** more emotional well being measurements should be used instead… (N3)

The private verbs *BELIEVE*, *THINK*, and *FEEL* were primarily used in the texts to (a) take an overt stance on the Thought Essay prompt or (b) proffer advice to the reader/audience. Biber (1998) argues that features such as first person pronouns, second person pronouns, and private verbs – all characteristics of the Thought Essay genre – are indicators of involved, interactive, and affective production that entails "high interpersonal interaction or high expression of feelings" (p. 106).

Additional concordances were computed for first person plural pronouns. In line with keyword analysis presented in the findings, one of the most striking collocational patterns of first person plural pronouns was its relationship to modals. In order of frequency, the following modals were found to collocate with first person plural pronouns: *CAN*, *WOULD*, *SHOULD*, *MUST*, *WILL* and *COULD*. Some uses of this pattern (i.e. first person plural pronoun + modal) are illustrated:

> I would go farther and say that as leaders **we should** be willing to contemplate that the bottom lines should be reversed… (S1)
> As managers **we must** begin to shift away from the belief that we need to "control"… (R2)

> As leaders these are the things that **we need to** convey through the organization. (A2)

In discourse, modals such as *SHOULD*, *MUST*, and *NEED TO* function to mark obligation or necessity (Biber, 1988). In conjunction with the first person plural pronoun, necessity modals serve two primary purposes in the Thought Essay genre. First, this pattern is frequently used to proffer advice to the reader. Second, and perhaps more importantly, the use of first person plural pronouns serves to create solidarity between the author and the audience. Take, for example, two of the most frequently occurring patterns in WordSmith cluster analysis: "we as managers" and "as leaders we." These discourse patterns serve several rhetorical and socio-communicative functions. First, this pattern enables the novice to stake a claim as a legitimate member of the MBA discourse community. In essence, the author conveys the notion – "I am not just a student, but I am also an experienced manager and business leader. As such, you should take my advice seriously." Taking such a posture lends the essay and the author an element of authority. Second, this pattern helps convey a sense of solidarity or camaraderie with the audience. Although the scope of *WE* and *OUR* is unclear in many examples, this pattern typically serves to tie the author with the audience (whether that be a group of peers or the professor). In essence, use of this feature serves to identify the author as a legitimate member of the larger discourse community.

Non-native Speaker Essays

Although a number of key differences were encountered between GE and PT essays, post-hoc observations additionally revealed several salient features of the Thought Essays

written by non-native speakers (NNS) of English. In fact, of the three of the non-native speakers who participated in this study, all were among the lowest overall scorers (Table 5-4).

Table 5-4 Student Scores (*NNS)

ID	Essay-1	Essay-2	Essay-3	TOTAL
E	1	1	1	3
G*	1	1	1	3
B*	1	2	1	4
M*	1	2	1	4
V	1	2	1	4
L	1	2	2	5
R	2	1	2	5
U	2	2	1	5
J	2	2	2	6
N	2	2	2	6
A	2	2	3	7
D	2	2	3	7
K	2	2	3	7
P	2	2	3	7
C	3	3	3	9
F	3	3	3	9
H	3	3	3	9
Q	3	3	3	9
S	3	3	3	9
T	3	3	3	9
W	3	3	3	9
X	3	3	3	9

In order to determine whether these NNS texts differed from the remaining PT essays, descriptive statistics along several measures were generated for both groups. Interestingly, differences were noted for 2 of the 3 factors that significantly contributed to differences between GE and PT essays. Specifically, notable differences were found for number of words and number of second person pronouns. Whereas the remaining PT essays averaged a total of 905 words, the NNS texts only averaged 763 words in length. This parallels the more general observation that number of words was the greatest predictor of essay score. In addition, the NNS texts, on

average, used twice as many second person pronouns (6.9) as the remaining PT essays (3.3). Again, this parallels the more general observation that frequent use of second person pronouns results in lower scores. In other words, when considering the factors that contribute to low assessment, NNS texts exhibit greater frequency of these features than other poorly assessed texts.

Several other additional differences were noted between NNS essays and the remaining PT texts. As mentioned previously, the use of questions was found to be a formal constraint of the genre and a rhetorical device by which students could further the exploration of the issues reflected by the Thought Essay prompt. In addition, GE texts used this device more frequently than their poorly assessed counterparts. This trend is continued when NNS texts are compared with the remaining PT essays. Whereas the remaining PT essays used an average of 2.33 questions per essay, the NNS texts only managed .29 questions per text. Moreover, whereas 66.7% of the remaining PT essays used overt questions, only one NNS text (14.3%) exhibited this feature. This finding lends credence to the notion that non-native speakers are hindered even more than their PT peers by a more limited linguistic and rhetorical repertoire.

One of the more striking differences between NNS texts and the remaining PT essays was in first person singular pronoun use. On average, the remaining PT essays used first person singular pronouns more than 37 times as frequently as NNS texts. Whereas only 29% of the NNS texts exhibited this feature, 83% of the remaining PT texts showed evidence of first person singular pronouns. The question that naturally arises, is what accounts for this surprising difference in pronoun frequency? Although it is difficult to answer this question without directly interviewing the NNS students, it appears likely that previously learned prescriptive rules may be at work. Specifically, NNS students may have been instructed in their home countries to avoid

the use of *I* and *ME* in English academic writing. Although academic writing in general is typically characterized author vacuity, this characteristic does not apply to hybrid genres such as the self-reflective essay. When encountering a new genre such as the Thought Essay, it is understandable then why NNS authors might fall back upon prescriptive norms to construct their texts.

In summary, a number of qualitative and quantitative differences in text structure and lexico-grammatical usage were observed between GE, PT, and NNS essays. As a genre, a wide degree of variation was observed and explained by the nascency of the genre and the rapid turnover of membership. In terms of organizational structure, the two groups of essays were more similar than different. Specifically, both GE and PT texts exhibited features of academic discourse (in particular the 5-paragraph essay) and popular business/leadership literature (i.e., the core texts of the course). The highly assessed GE texts, however, were found to have higher frequencies of these features than the PT essays. In terms of lexico-grammatical usage, a similar pattern was found. Namely, GE texts evidenced greater frequency of features characteristic of academic discourse and business/leadership genres. Moreover, several unique features of the Thought Essay genre, were found and explained in terms of the contextual and socio-communicative functions of the discourse community. The rhetorical move of proffering advice, for example, was explained as a literary mechanism through which novice students staked claims as legitimate members of the discourse community. These findings lend evidence to the notion of the Thought Essay as nascent, immature genre that serves both pedagogical and socializing functions in a highly localized MBA discourse community.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This research study began as an investigation into the occluded genres of advanced academic literacy. From the beginning, this study was primarily motivated by pedagogical intent. It sought not only to address the problems associated with the acquisition of advanced disciplinary knowledge, but to redress them as well. By examining a single occluded academic genre, I hoped to provide some assistance to the novice students struggling in the executive MBA program. I also hoped that some more general pedagogical insight might be gleaned from the research. Namely, I was looking for a solution to help students master the linguistic and rhetorical conventions of their discourse community. In this final chapter, I readdress the original research questions that framed this study and touch upon some pertinent issues of literacy socialization. This is followed by a brief examination of the methodological limitations of the present research. I conclude by reviewing three promising trends in genre-based education before making recommendations for future directions in genre pedagogy.

Addressing the Research Questions

In order to gain insight into the sociocultural and contextual factors that constrain the Thought Essay, it was necessary to first identify the lexico-grammatical and structural features of the genre. To this end, the following questions guided the present study:

RQ 1. What are the salient linguistic, organizational, and socio-communicative features of the Thought Essay genre as embodied in genre exemplars?
RQ 2. What are the common linguistic and organizational characteristics of poorly assessed target genre texts?
RQ 3. What are the key linguistic differences between poorly assessed texts and genre exemplars?

The research found, that in regards to linguistic features, the highly assessed Thought Essay exemplars are characterized by greater essay length, higher use of reference and citation, and less frequent use of second person pronouns. Poorly assessed texts differed from exemplars in both quantity and quality of these features. The poorer essays were generally shorter in length and contained fewer references. They also made more frequent, less controlled use of second person pronouns. Additional, quantitative and qualitative differences were also noted between the groups. Specifically, exemplar texts exhibited more frequent, more varied, and more controlled use of rhetorical devices than their poorly assessed counterparts.

From a structural standpoint, the research found several organizational differences between exemplar texts and poor texts. Quantitative and qualitative differences were found in prompt quoting, personal anecdote, stance taking, and advice proffering. Differences in prompt quoting were explained by the formal spatial constraints of the genre and the greater rhetorical resources available to exemplar authors. The use of personal anecdote and narrative added to the personal dimension of the genre and contributed to its heavy interpersonal focus and generally involved style of production. These features were found in varying degrees in both genre exemplars and poor texts, and help characterize the genre somewhere between informative and involved production. Stance taking was understood as the rhetorical transfer of features from another genre to the Thought Essay. Specifically, students often seemed to rely on the organizational features of the five paragraph essay to structure their Thought Essays. Advice proffering, on the other hand, was explained as an example of literacy socialization into the MBA discourse community. Namely, students used the linguistic and structural features they encountered in course texts to structure their own discourse and reconstruct their identity as

legitimate members of the discourse community. What differed between the texts, was how well the authors appropriated these discourse conventions.

The differences between exemplar essays and poor essays can be attributed to two primary factors: exposure and experience with academic discourse, and genre sensitivity to core disciplinary texts. Previous exposure to academic discourse provides exemplar authors a foundation upon which to frame their argument. Because the target genre is occluded, authors cannot fashion their discourse on prototypical texts, but rather, must rely upon *other* genres to structure their texts. The exemplar authors in this study, for example, relied upon the five paragraph essay. Though the 5-paragraph format was not strictly followed, authors typically relied upon the overall rhetorical structure to organize their own essays. Namely, exemplar authors followed conventions of offering a thesis statement in the introduction, restating it in the conclusion, and supporting it with examples and illustrations throughout the body. Furthermore, authors relied upon the stylistic and lexico-grammatical features of academic discourse in general. For example, a common feature of academic discourse, one which is often explicitly taught in freshman composition courses, is lack of second person pronouns (Swales & Feak, 1994). Whereas the exemplar authors typically followed this convention, the authors of poorly assessed texts used second person pronouns quite frequently.

Genre sensitivity and awareness is another contributing factor in essay quality. Namely, some students just seem to be more aware, or more in tune with the linguistic features and rhetorical conventions that characterize the genres they encounter. Genre sensitivity helps explain why some students relied upon academic discourse to model their papers, while others failed to. It also explains why features of core disciplinary texts were evident in greater numbers in exemplar student essays. Exemplar authors used core texts as models of appropriate discourse

conventions of the community; they relied upon them to structure their own arguments in ways that are socially and rhetorically acceptable to the larger discourse community.

Greater sensitivity and rapid mastery of discourse conventions enables students to move beyond their peers in staking claims as legitimate members of the discourse community. Genre awareness, then, operates in lockstep with community socialization. It facilitates the transition of novice members into full-fledge members of the discourse community. In this capacity, core texts of the community – what Gee (2002) calls big D Discourses – function as the primary vehicles of socialization and acculturation. They provide novice members examples of proper ways of "being and doing" an MBA student and business executive. They provide models of "what is to be said, who is to speak, [and] how it is to be said/presented" (Ramanathan & Kaplan, 2000, p. 176). Moreover, they give novices "certain values, attitudes, motivations, ways of interacting, and perspectives, all of which are more important than mere skills for successful entry into specific secondary Discourses" (Gee, 2002, p. 161). Core texts, along with other community discourses, function as agents of socialization and help change the novice student into a legitimate member of the business community.

Although only 3 of the 22 participants identified themselves as non-native speakers of English, several intriguing characteristics of NNS texts emerged. Specifically, NNS texts possessed features that tended to promote poor assessment. NNS texts were both shorter in length and contained more second person pronouns than other poorly assessed texts. Linguistically, NNS authors had fewer rhetorical resources they could rely on in constructing their arguments. This lack, it was found, prevented NNS authors from following some of emerging constraints of the genre, such as social claim staking and advice proffering. Moreover, it was argued that previously learned prescriptive rules on academic writing and lack of expose

to specific genres may have hindered NNS in writing successful Thought Essays. These findings help support Schleppegrell's (2002) claim that non-native speakers are doubly disadvantaged in academic writing because they have both fewer linguistic resources and less experience with English genre norms.

Viewed as a whole, the Thought Essay emerges as nascent, highly-localized, hybrid genre featuring characteristics of both academic discourse and popular business literature. As a relatively immature genre, the Thought Essay reflects a high degree of lexico-grammatical and structural variation because these features have not had time to develop a symbiotic relationship with the parent discourse community. In other words, the genre is experiencing a time of evolutionary flux as its linguistic and rhetorical features evolve to meet the socio-communicative needs of members of the discourse community. This notion aligns with Fishelov's (1993) metaphor of genre as a biological species. Namely, genres evolve, mutate, spread, and eventually decline just like species do. Just as environmental pressures drive biological speciation, so do the sociocultural context and communicative needs of the discourse community drive the evolution of genre. As the Thought Essay functions in a highly-localized community with rapid and complete membership turnover, it remains to be seen whether this genre will eventually become more stable and reflect less variation.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

There are several notable limitations to the present study. As with much research in applied linguistics, the participants for this study were self-selected. Of the 35 students enrolled in the Organizational Behavior class, only 22 agreed to participate in this research. Perhaps the observed 2:1 ratio of GE to PT texts was a result of less proficient students not wanting to

participate in this investigation. Furthermore, the small sample of texts (n=57) may not adequately represent the genre as a whole. Perhaps most importantly, this research study was limited by scope and time; it focused upon a single genre within a single discourse community over the course of one semester. Moreover, the scope of this study prevented a full analysis of the numerous other discourse community genres that may factor in the literacy socialization of students.

Other key limitations of this study include the small number of non-native speakers of English who participated in this research and the general lack ethnographical grounding. What seems to be called for in future genre research is both breadth and depth. Namely, studies need to be conducted that examine a wide panoply of issues including the differences among good texts and poor texts, novice authors and expert writers, and native speakers and second language learners. Moreover, future research needs to incorporate a variety of qualitative methods such as classroom observations and interviews in order to paint a more detailed portrait of the sociocultural context that shapes the production and consumption of academic texts.

The Future of Genre Pedagogy

Despite the limitations, however, the present study suggests the need for explicit genre-analysis instruction and rhetorical consciousness raising. New students, like the first semester MBA students in this study, are often completely unaware of genre conventions, yet are expected to master them in relatively short order. Though a critical component of academic and professional success, genre knowledge is seldom taught in graduate-level courses. Rather, it is expected that novice students will learn the conventions of their discourse community in the same way their professors did – through a slow process of discipline socialization and personal

trial and error. For the novice MBA students in this study, the problem is doubly confounded because the genre they are writing in is occluded – there are no real world counterparts for students to use as models for their own papers. How then, can students be expected to master these discourses which are so critical for their future academic and professional success? One possible answer is to use findings from studies such as the present one to help inform classroom pedagogy. Although this is undoubtedly part of the solution, it is not the whole answer.

The solution may reside in a number of genre-based pedagogies that have developed in recent years. The most influential and mature of these is the so-called "Sydney School." Based on the pioneering work of Halliday in *Systemic Functional Linguistics* (SFL), the "Sydney School" has spent over two decades analyzing the common genres of Australian academics. This school has developed genre-based pedagogies that "include clearly outlined, straightforward elemental genre descriptions for teachers at a number of levels and in a variety of academic content areas" (Johns, 2003, p. 201). Through this genre-based curriculum, Australian elementary and high school students are formally exposed to the structures of culturally valued genres. Hasan (1996) explains that through genre-based pedagogies, teachers are "able to increase pupils' awareness of what counts as a report, and what as a description; how an instruction for carrying out an experiment differs from an essay on the evils of racism, and so on" (p. 401). By making explicit the purpose, structure, and lexico-grammatical features of valued genres, the Australian pedagogy provides students with the knowledge necessary for success in the public school system.

Although developed for English L2 students, English for Academic Purposes (EAP) is another promising area of genre instruction. EAP approaches fall into two distinct categories: English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) and English for Specific Academic Purposes

(ESAP). EGAP classes, which are often found at the undergraduate level, in the guise of "teaching across the curriculum," focus on the instruction of general literacy skills including composition in common academic genres. As Wennerstrom (2003) observes, however,

> academic ESL instruction is often thought to be a quick fix, through which general language skills, such as grammar and mechanics, are supposed to prepare students for higher-level assignments. Moreover, a focus on a single genre, the five-paragraph essay, has tended to dominate the academic ESL writing instruction, partly because the instructors, having been English majors themselves, are easily familiar with this genre. (p. 124)

The problem with this approach is two-fold. First, genres cannot be taught in isolation from one another. Instead, a contrastive approach integrating both inter-genre and intra-genre analysis must be utilized. As Kern (2000) argues, a genre cannot be understood by examining a single instance of that genre; rather, "one must look at multiple examples of a given genre in order to allow learners to identify what rhetorical features are common across them. [Furthermore,] one cannot understand a given genre by looking at examples of that genre alone; one must compare with examples of other related genres as well, in order to see what features a given genre does *not* have and to see how genre features vary with communicative purpose" (p. 90). Second, as important as the five paragraph essay is to general academic success (at least at the undergraduate level), it fails to equip students for the multiple genres they will be expected to master in graduate school.

English for Specific Academic Purposes, another promising direction for genre-based instruction, are found in graduate-level ESL classes and professional workshops. These courses tend to focus upon the specific skills and generic forms of particular academic and professional

communities. Typically, ESAP courses, which focus on a few important genres of a discourse community, teach students the "generic recipes" or structures of these genres. For example, an ESAP-style course for physicists would teach the IMRAD structure of the scientific research article (RA). Students and instructors would examine several model texts noting the functional and stylistic conventions of the various sections. Following the work of Swales (1990) and Swales and Freak (1994), in analyzing the RA introduction, students would be shown the "upside down trapezoid" of the scientific introduction, as the author moves from general to more specific subject mater. Additionally, students would be introduced to the CARS (Create a Research Space) model of the scientific introduction as they follow the three mandatory generic moves: (1) Establish the field; (2) Establish the niche; and (3) Occupy the niche. Although this prescriptive style of instruction undoubtedly has its place in ESAP instruction, it fails with respect to some key points. First, although this approach enables students to write in the specific genres they are taught, it does not help students with the myriad other genres they are likely to encounter in their academic careers.

What seems to be called for is a genre-based pedagogy that meets the unique needs of *all* graduate-level students in a wide range of academic disciplines. In order to succeed in their respective fields, students need to master the important genres of their academic communities, as well as cultivate the *skills and abilities* to deal with the numerous other genres they will encounter. Since the number of genres to be mastered is potentially limitless, "what is needed is a discovery approach… in which students first become aware of the importance of genres in communication, and then are taught how to identify the characteristic features of genres by themselves" (Kern, 2000, p. 199). In other words, educators need to teach students not just literacy skills but also how to critically engage and analyze the texts they encounter. At the

graduate level, this would suggest the need for heightening students rhetorical consciousness and explicit instruction in the skills of genre analysis.

Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent to Participate in Research Study

Brandon C. Loudermilk
The University of Texas at San Antonio, Division of Bicultural-Bilingual Studies

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Under the supervision of Dr. Robert Bayley, Professor of the Division of Bicultural-Bilingual Studies at the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA), Brandon C. Loudermilk, a graduate student in Division of Bicultural-Bilingual Studies, is conducting research on academic literacy.

PROCEDURES

As a normal part of your Organizational Behavior class, you will be required to write three "Thought Essays" over the course of the Fall 2005 semester. If you elect to participate in this study, your essays, graded by your professor, will included in a private, secure database of student texts. A variety of software tools and utilities will then be utilized on this corpus in order to extract the common linguistic features of the Thought Essay genre. In addition to providing digital copies of your essays, participants will also be required to answer a short questionnaire. In summary, if you agree to participate in this research study, the following will occur:

- You will answer a short, written questionnaire
- You will email a copy of your Thought Essay to the researcher. This will be done for each Thought Essay your write, for a total of three essays.
- Your essays will be compiled into an electronic corpus for purposes of linguistic analysis

RISKS

Choosing to participate or not participate in this study will in no way affect your grades. Although there is always a risk of loss of privacy, no names or identifying features will be used in any published reports of the research. The research data will be kept in a secure location, and only the researcher and members of the thesis committee will have access to the data. At the conclusion of the study, all identifying information will be removed and the data will be kept in a locked cabinet or office. At all times, participants have the right to refuse to answer any question or to provide copies of writing assignments. Additionally, participants have the right to drop out of the study at any time they wish.

DIRECT BENEFITS

There will be no direct benefits for participants of this research.

COMPENSATION

There will be no compensation for participants of this research.

ALTERNATIVES

Participation in this research is voluntary. Students are free to decline to participate in this research study, or to withdraw their participation at any point, without penalty. Their decision whether or not to participate in this research study has no influence on their present or future status at the University of Texas at San Antonio and will in no way affect their class grade.

RECEIVED AND UNDERSTAND THE INFORMATION PRESENTED

I have read the statements of purposes and procedures of the study (including any probable discomfort risk). I have been allowed to ask questions about these and all such questions have been fully answered. I understand that:

a. I have the right to withdraw, without prejudice, from the study at any time, and, I will still receive credit for my participation.
b. If I elect to withdraw from the study, any information I have given will not be used.
c. All information will be kept strictly confidential. Neither my name nor any other identifying characteristics will be used without my permission when the information is reported.
d. If I find any question to be disturbing, I have the option of not answering the question.
e. I am 18 years old or older.
f. Refusal to participate will not result in any loss of benefits to which I am entitled.

QUESTIONS

You have spoken with Brandon C. Loudermilk about this study and have had your questions answered. If you have any further questions about the study, you may contact the researcher by email at blouderm@lonestar.utsa.edu or by phone at (210) 862-3499. The research supervisor, Dr. Robert Bayley may be contacted at rbayley@utsa.edu or (210) 458 – 5577.

If you believe you have been injured or harmed as a consequence of your participation, contact Mr. Noe Saldaña, Office of Research Development by calling 210-458-4340.

Privacy Notice

With a few exceptions, you are entitled to be informed about the information U.T. San Antonio collects about you. Under Sections 552.021 and 552.023 of the Texas Government Code, you are entitled to receive and review this information. Under Section 559.004 of the Texas Government Code, you are entitled to have U.T. San Antonio correct information about you that is held by us and that is incorrect, in accordance with the procedures set forth in the University of Texas System Business Procedures Memorandum 32. The information that U.T. San Antonio collects will be retained and maintained as required by Texas records retention laws (Section

441.180 et seq. of the Texas Government Code) and rules. Different types of information are kept for different periods of time.

I voluntarily consent to take part in the above described research study:

Participant - Print Name: _____ Researcher – Print Name: _____

Signed: _____ Signed: _____

Date: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B: Participant Questionnaire

Participant Questionnaire

Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Nationality: _____ Gender: ○ Male ○ Female

Contact Email: _____

Highest Level of Education Completed: ☐ BA, BS ☐ MA, MS ☐ Professional ☐ PhD

Institution	Major/Minor	Country	Language of Instruction

How much time have you spent or lived in the United States? _____ Years _____ Months

English is my native language: ○ Yes ○ No

If no, what is your native language? _____

How many years have you spoken English? _____

How many years have you studied English? _____

What other languages do you speak or read? _____

Additional Information (Please feel free to write any additional information about your linguistic, ethnic, national, or educational background):

Appendix C: Internal Review Board Documentation

UTSA The University of Texas at San Antonio

Office of Research Development

November 15, 2005

Mr. Brandon Loudermilk
UTSA - College of Education and Human Development
Division of Bicultural Bilingual Studies
6900 North Loop 1604 West
San Antonio, TX 78249-0631

Dear: Mr. Loudermilk

Re: IRB # 06-053 **"A Sociolinguistic Analysis of the MBA Thought Essay Genre"**

The responses you sent on November 1, 2005, in regards to the stipulation letter dated on October 31, 2005 for the above protocol, were reviewed by the Institutional Review Board on November 15, 2005, and were approved through the expedited review process.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

1) Conduct the study only according to the protocol approved by the IRB; promptly report any protocol, policy or regulatory deviations or violations to the IRB;

2) Report **immediately** to the IRB all deaths of subjects, regardless of cause;

3) Report **immediately** to the IRB any severe adverse event or serious problem, whether anticipated or unanticipated;

4) Report any significant findings that become known in the course of the research that might affect the willingness of subjects to continue to take part;

5) Ensure that only formally designated study personnel (as approved by the IRB) enroll subjects;

6) ***Protect the confidentiality of all personally identifiable information collected and train your staff and collaborators on policies and procedures for ensuring confidentiality of this information.***

7) Submit for review and approval by the IRB all modifications to the protocol or consent form(s) prior to the implementation of the change;

8) Submit a **Progress Report** for continuing review by the IRB. Federal regulations require IRB review of ongoing projects no less than one year (a Progress Report will be sent to you 2 months prior to the expiration date); and

9) Notify the IRB when the study has been completed and prepare a final report.

In reviewing the consent form which has incorporated a privacy notice, the IRB has verified that the consent document contains the required elements. However, please note that the IRB cannot be responsible for determining whether or not all parties will be working with the identifiable information. Only the investigator in consultation with the sponsor (if any) can make that determination as it will be different for each individual study. ***Keep in mind that you must operate with the parameters you have defined in the authorization portion of the consent.*** You will not be able to legally obtain Personal Health Information that was not included in the authorization nor will you be able to disclose PHI to any party not listed in the authorization, without re-consenting the subject or obtaining a waiver from the IRB, if applicable. Information about the HIPPA Privacy Rule is available at the IRB office per your request.

The following research has been considered to fall under category 7 of the NIH guidelines:
Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural belief or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

The Board determined there is minimal risk to subjects who will participate in this study and that the risk: benefit ratio is acceptable. The Board determined that continuing review will occur ANNUALLY. This approval includes the consent form. **Should you have any questions please contact Christina Montoya at 210-458-6473 and Anna Perez at 210-458-6506.**

Next IRB Review: **October 2006/IRB approval expires: November 15, 2006**

Sincerely,

Barbara Rodela, M.A.
Director, Office of Research Integrity & Compliance

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Vita

Brandon Loudermilk was born on July 1st, 1971 in Dallas, Texas to Dr. Gary and Mrs. Beth Loudermilk. He received his B.A. in Anthropology from Reed College in 1994. Mr. Loudermilk worked as a software engineer and architect for several years before moving to Korea where he taught English as a foreign language. He has since returned to academia and completed his M.A. in Bicultural-Bilingual Studies with a concentration in English as a Second Language from the University of Texas, San Antonio in 2006.