



# STATIC RULES, DYNAMIC STYLES: THE BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF DISCIPLINARY WRITERS

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#1: SHOW, DON'T TELL

“

*Dan's preface to his writing guide:*

*“The emphasis is on scientific writing, but the same principles apply to most non-fiction (including journalism).”*

# SHOW, DON'T TELL: DAN'S WRITING GUIDE

- ▶ “Don't say something is interesting without explaining why it is interesting. Better yet, don't say it—show it.”

them doesn't help.

- 27) You likely lack IRB approval for murder. When describing procedures for throwing out data from bad subjects, make sure that you are eliminating the data, not the subjects. Don't say: “We eliminated three subjects due to poor accuracy levels.” Instead say: “We eliminated data from three subjects due to poor accuracy levels.”
- 28) If you ever find yourself saying "As noted above" or "As discussed earlier" you need to reorganize your paper.
- 29) Don't use the word “random” to mean “arbitrary.”
- 30) Don't say something is interesting without explaining why it is interesting. Better yet, don't say it—show it.
- 31) Minds and brains don't see, interact, explore, or perceive. People do. Don't say “the brain sees.” Don't use the phrase “in the brain” unless you are drawing a distinction with another organ. Also, unless you are distinguishing humans from other species, don't use phrases like “the human brain” or “the human mind.” Just use “brain” or “mind.”

# SHOW, DON'T TELL: DAN'S BLOG

- ▶ “In writing the paper and re-weighting the samples, **I discovered something interesting** about who responds to these sorts of surveys....”
- ▶ “For me, **this figure was eye-opening**. I wasn't surprised that...., but I had no idea....”

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*Dan's reply: “blog style,” “more tell than show”*



#2: "MANY AMERICANS TODAY  
BELIEVE..."

# "MANY AMERICANS TODAY BELIEVE": MARY'S LIT REVIEW DRAFT

“(1) Many Americans today believe that we live in a non-racist society where each racial group treats each other with respect and dignity. (2) Individuals often claim they do not hold any explicit racist attitudes or beliefs. (3) Yet, implicit racist attitudes or biases can often manifest themselves in everyday interactions. (4) For example, a White woman may clutch her bag tightly when walking by an individual of color late at night, or a White individual may receive a job offering over a Black individual, despite their equal qualifications...”



# "MANY AMERICANS TODAY BELIEVE": MARY'S REVISION

~~“(1) Many Americans today believe that we live in a non-racist society where each racial group treats each other with respect and dignity. (2) Individuals often claim they do not hold any explicit racist attitudes or beliefs. (3) Yet, implicit, unconscious racial biases commonly manifest themselves in everyday interactions. (4) Our implicit biases are certain “actions or judgments that are under the control of automatically activated evaluation, without the performer’s awareness of that causation” (Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998, p. 1464). (5) We can witness implicit racial preferences in interactions such as hiring decisions, medical interventions, and classroom environments. (6) A White woman who is not consciously aware of having racial prejudice or bias may clutch her bag tighter when walking by an individual of color late at night...”~~

# "MANY AMERICANS TODAY BELIEVE": DIFFERENT RESPONSES

Q: Would you add those first two sentences back in?

## **DAN, THESIS COURSE PROFESSOR**

No. They are attempts to “bring people in,” but “unnecessary,” “too broad,” “platititude statements.”

## **MIKHAIL, THESIS ADVISOR**

Yes. It “works” without them, but they “draw the reader in.” These sentences are “more likely to have people engage emotionally.”

# IMPLICATIONS FOR WAC/WID RESEARCH + TEACHING

- ▶ **Disciplinary styles are not uniform and homogeneous but are a bricolage of influences and repertoires**

# THAISS + ZAWACKI'S (2006)

## FIVE CONTEXTS

Faculty's knowledge about writing is an “ambiguous mix” of the following preferences/contexts:

- ▶ General academic
- ▶ Disciplinary
- ▶ Subdisciplinary
- ▶ Local/institutional
- ▶ Idiosyncratic/personal (p. 61)

# BLOMMAERT'S (2010) NOTION OF TRUNCATED REPERTOIRES

Our truncated repertoires are

- ▶ **“composed of specialized but partially and unevenly developed resources.** We never know ‘all’ of a language, we always know specific bits and pieces of it. This counts for our ‘mother tongue’ as well as for the languages we pick up in the course of a lifetime, and this is perfectly normal” (p. 23).
- ▶ **“grounded in people's biographies and in the wider histories of the places where they are composed”** (p. 23).

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- ▶ **Our research and teaching need to help writers develop their metalinguistic awareness and meta-awareness of writing** (e.g., Aull, 2015; Flash, in press; Lancaster, 2016; VanKooten, 2016; Zinchuk, 2015; Yancey, Robertson, & Taczak, 2014)



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- ▶ **Our models of writing expertise and development need to account for the *continued presence and evolution* of particular language and writing ideologies in expert writers and the limits to their metalinguistic awareness**

# THAISS + ZAWACKI'S (2006) MODEL OF DISCIPLINARY WRITING DEVELOPMENT

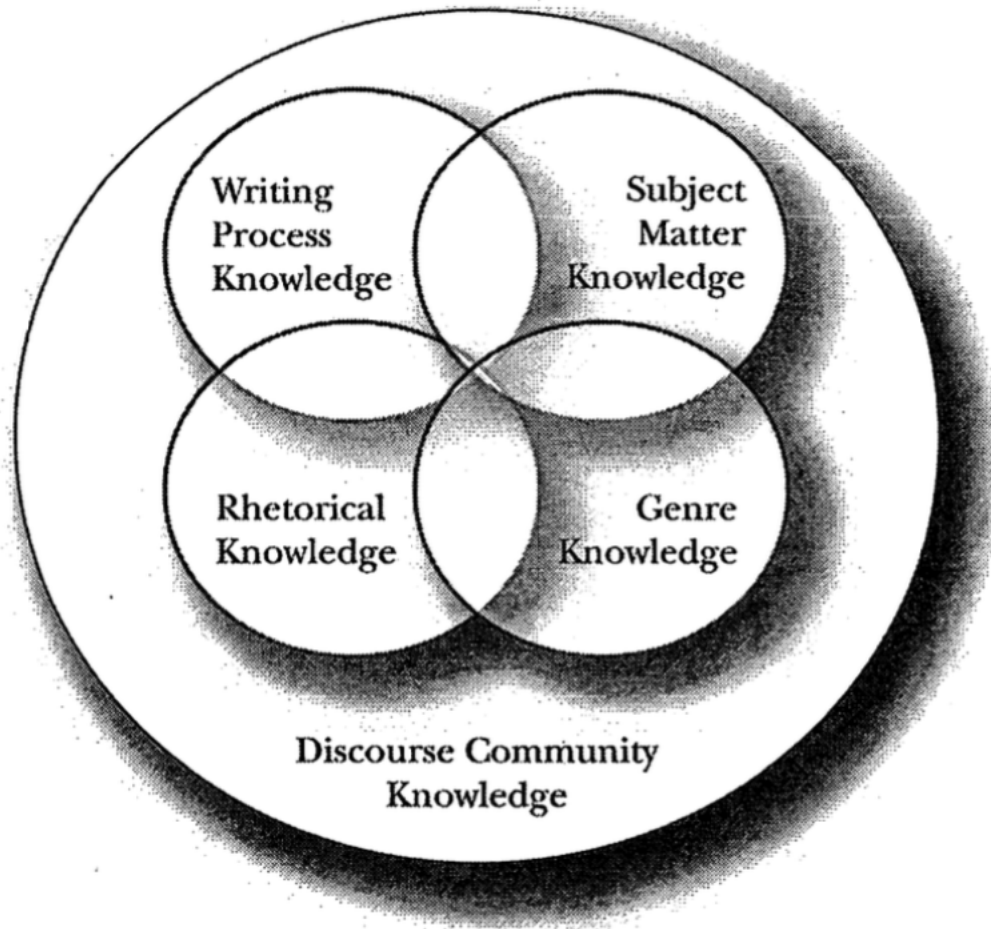
1. “A first stage in which the writer bases a sense of disciplinary consistency on writing experience in very few courses with criteria in these courses **generalized into ‘rules’**”
2. “A second stage in which the writer encounters different exigencies in different courses, and the sense of inconsistency, sometimes interpreted as **teacher idiosyncrasy**, supplants the perception of consistency.”
3. “A third stage...in which the writer understands the differences as **components of an articulated, nuanced idea of the discipline.**” (pp. 109-110)

# LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES

- ▶ “beliefs, feelings, and conceptions about language structure and use”
- ▶ “often index the political economic interests” of speakers or groups
- ▶ may be “explicitly articulated or embodied in communicative practice”
- ▶ **are usually “incomplete, or ‘partially successful,’ attempts to rationalize language usage”**

(Kroskrity, 2010, p. 192)

# BEAUFORT'S (2007) MODEL OF WRITING EXPERTISE



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# THANK YOU!



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