Economics 999 Original Research Paper

ROGER GRAVES

DIRECTOR WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

The writing process
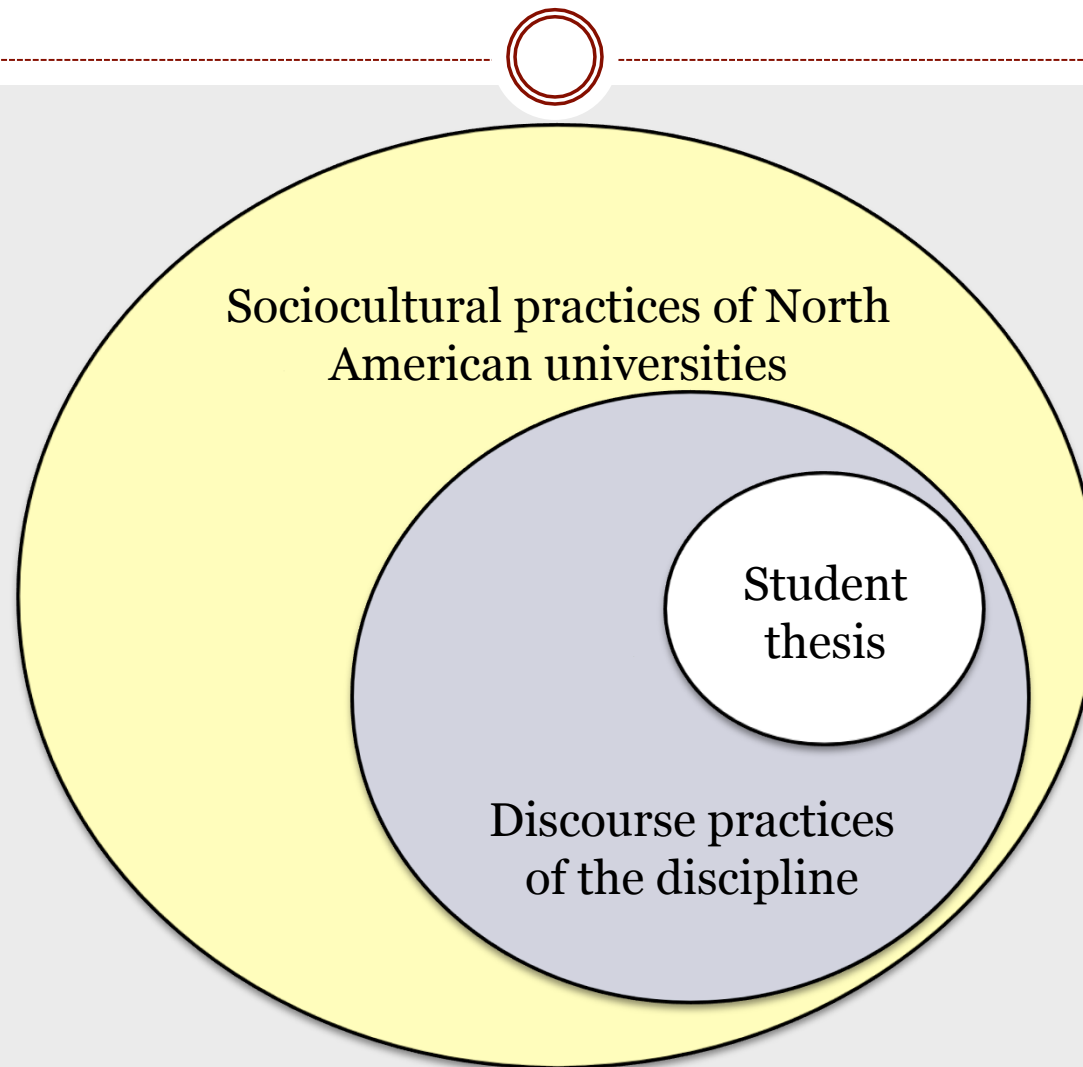
- Idea generation at all stages
- Iterative process
- Drafting
- Revising
- Genre knowledge; genre as social action
- Groups, research teams

~~Format~~/Genre

- Format refers to a description of the look or dimensions of a document: double-spaced, 500 words, 4 citations, APA style

- Genre refers instead to the communicative function of the document: to persuade me that your research is worth funding, that you follow acceptable research methods

- Think about assignment descriptions given to undergraduates—they often focus too much on format and offer little guidance about the intellectual task the assignment demands

Writing as social practice

Sociocultural practices of North American universities

Discourse practices of the discipline

Student thesis

Fairclough's three dimensions of discourse, as depicted in B. Kammler and P. Thomson, *Helping Doctoral Students Write Well*, p. 21.

Discourse communities

- Swales (1991) developed the concept of discourse communities to explain the purposes within documents
- His concept of rhetorical "moves" within documents —such as "establish a research territory"—leads to one method for establishing the typical purposes for a document
- SSHRC research grant evaluation committees form into discourse communities for example

Genre sets

- Genres typically do not occur alone but instead as part of a set of social actions within a group

- Graduate students may write a variety of related documents: grant applications, course papers, exams, conference proposals, posters, a thesis

- What are the related genres for economics students?

Structure of paper

1. Introduction
2. Review of Literature and Industrial Context
3. Relevant Economic Theory
4. Econometric Model
5. Data Sources and Summary Statistics
6. Econometric Results and Discussion
7. Conclusions
8. References
9. Tables and Figures

Argument challenges

- Articulate the question; motivation for the question; policy relevance of the question

Claims and Assumptions

- Claim + stated reason rest upon an unstated reason
- Both the stated and unstated reasons rely on shared assumptions of value between the writer and the reader
- Evidence demonstrates the validity of the stated or unstated reasons
- When values are shared, less evidence is needed to convince the reader
- What values does your instructor have? How can you show you share them?

Example

- The paper thus deals with changes in several local services and businesses (e.g., physicians, post offices, grocery/convenience stores, pharmacies) to expose similarities or dissimilarities between their performances and that of the banking system over time and space.

A claim

- This [data] reveals that the pattern of branch closures in the country's numerous smallest communities (n=544), which are usually dispersed geographically, is different from that developed in the largest communities (n=54)
- [this is true because] the access to other banking alternatives such as ATM and Internet is more generalized.

Another example

- The Canadian banking system has undergone major changes in the delivery of services to customers since the early 1990s. Advances in banking technology, efforts to reduce costs, improvements in efficiency and consolidation processes combined to reorganize the banking network. Banks moved towards a multichannel approach by combining physical outlets, automated banking machines (ATMs) and Internet technology. The number of branches declined throughout the country while the branchless options for banking increased. This study addresses how banks fit into the transformation of small communities in Canada -- those with less than about 50,000 inhabitants -- and presents an exploratory examination of this transformation.

Example

- "Recently, Alberta has received much media attention because of its massive drawing power for migrants in a context of unprecedented economic growth (3 references 2007/2006). A less noticed but equally important development is the steady increase of the birth rate in this province, a situation diametrically at odds with the persistent pattern of low fertility in Canada. Most surprising is the apparent lack of scholarly interest to this new development. My study seeks to address this void in the demographic literature . . ."

- Context:
  Identify and summarize relevant economic literature

Another example

- Previous works suggest that rural communities suffered to a great extent from bank branch closures (Bowles 2000) and that access to ATMs would not replace bank branches easily (Option Consommateurs 2003). However, studies conducted in the U.S. (Avery et al 1999), Great Britain (Willis et al 2001) and Australia (Argent 2002) have found that the impact on small places is not unambiguously negative. The analysis assesses developments in the banking system within the context of the retail-service transformation of small communities. The performance of these places either positively or negatively affects the increase or decrease of entrepreneurial initiatives in those communities (Dahms 1995). This study emphasizes community factors over business specific factors without denying the fact that the latter can also be decisive in the performance of small town businesses (Miller et al 2003).

- Provide overview of relevant economic theory and theoretical foundation for predictions to be tested and model to be estimated

- Describe the industrial/institutional context; justify the empirical strategy

- Cite and describe data sources and how they were manipulated

Data

- The 2001 Census provided the list of census sub-divisions (CSDs) with population of about 50,000 or less. These spatial units of analysis embrace the small communities for which data on banking and other services were collected. In order to represent the overall socioeconomic environment of these communities, data on population and dwellings growth, labour force, participation, employment, unemployment, household income and sources of income were obtained for the appropriate CSDs from the 2001 Census. The Canadian Bankers Association supplied the location of branches of its member banks and, from Canadian Payments Association data, of other members of the Canadian Payments Association for 2000-2004 and branch closures for the five largest banks for 1998-2004. The 1 Centre for the Study of Commercial Activity, Ryerson University, provided the total number of physicians/surgeons, dentists, clinics, pharmacies, post offices, grocery/convenience stores and car/truck dealers for the appropriate CSDs.

Statistical methods

- Adjustments in the banking system were assessed first at the macro level through summary information on the socioeconomic environment and local services and businesses by population range (i.e., < 5000, 5000-9999, 10000-20000 and >20000 inhabitants). Secondly, a regression analysis was performed to test statistically the relationship between developments in the number of bank branches and other local services and businesses (e.g., physicians, grocery/convenience stores) and the community socioeconomic environment (e.g., labour force participation, household income).

- Results; interpretation; policy implications

- Future work: follow-up studies?

References

Jones, K., & Gomez-Insausti, R. (2006). Banks in Small Communities in Canada: 1998-2004. *Canadian Journal of Regional Science*, 29(3), 393-404. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.