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Analysing Professional Genres

# ANALYSING PROFESSIONAL GENRES

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## Singular Utterances: Realizing Local Activities through Typified Forms in Typified Circumstances

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#### Genre and utterance

Every time we write, we create a new utterance for a new circumstance. That's why writing is so hard: each time we write we have to think of new, appropriate, effective words in an extended turn as part of an interaction that is not immediately visible to us, an interaction we have to imagine. On the other hand, we write in identifiable realms of discourse, mobilizing recognizable forms to locate our activity, perceive possibilities, shape intentions, and make our utterances intelligible to our readers. That's what makes writing not totally impossible or unimaginable. Theory and research on genre help us identify the invented social spaces that mediate communication.

When we think of originality in typified locales, it is perhaps the idiosyncratic examples that come to mind — such as Gould and Lewontin's "The Spandrels of San Marcos and the Panglossian Paradigm," originally delivered at a Symposium of the Royal Society, and published in the *Proceedings of the Royal Society* (Gould and Lewontin 1979). This ostensibly scientific paper, offering a critique of dominant evolutionary thought, mixes quotations from Voltaire and architectural drawings of medieval cathedrals with a review of evolutionary literature going back to Darwin. Such examples often blur, overlay, or otherwise twist genres into new shape. Or perhaps we think of singular utterances as the singularly successful text that appears thoroughly ordinary, but says something that turns out to be extremely important, such as Watson and Crick's "A Structure for Deoxyribose Nucleic Acid." (Watson and Crick 1953)

We ought to remember, however, that the most ordinary and undistinguished article in any journal has something to say, is the product of extensive work, and attempts to intervene in some novel way in an ongoing discussion—is, in short, an utterance.

## Text, discourse, rhetoric and composition

We often have a hard time bringing together our notions of typified, genred regularity of writing with our appreciation of the novelty and specificity of each new utterance. In the study of the rhetoric and discourse of science (the LSP area I am most familiar with) we can see two opposite approaches towards individuality and regularity, but each equally serve to keep novelty and genre far apart.

One cluster of work aims to demonstrate the individuality of utterance, arguing that scientific and technical writing is a skilled, local activity, a matter of art and therefore human construction. Motives for this work range from the appreciation of individuals (as in Locke 1992), to revealing the nature of the art (as in the essays in Selzer 1993), to calling into question the epistemic authority of an objective science (as in Collins 1985).

Another cluster has been to find the regularized forms and processes of language, pragmatics, and text organization. Here the motive has been primarily the study of language with an eye towards education and text improvement, so as to teach students the ways of language they will need to read and write. This work includes Halliday and Martin's (1993) examination of nominalization, Swales' (1990) work on article introductions, and Myers' work on irony and politeness (1989, 1990). Investigations into these patterns has been pursued through large corpuses and through singular examples, but even the singular examples are studied as to how they either reveal general patterns or have entered into the historical production of regularities. Sometimes historians of science also consider how individuals have worked within communicative regularities that we no longer share, to remind us how different the pursuit of knowledge was in other times and places (as in Biagioli 1993).

Between these we might place work with a rhetorical impulse — that is, a concern with the strategic use of the regularized processes and resources of communication. This approach mixes concerns for the particular and the general to provide practical advice for framing utterances and evaluating the utterances of others. Prelli (1989) and others have pursued the rhetoric of science through principles of classical rhetoric which assume similarity of processes, techniques and resources across all situations. However, classical rhetoric's

subsumption of special purposes into general advice washes out the particularities of science, technology, or any specialized endeavor, in ways that both misguide and perhaps alienate practitioners who are motivated to participate in a special practice. Practitioners are only too aware of the particularity that distinguishes their endeavor, and that provides perhaps their very reason for preferring their mode of professionalism. And for first and second language learners, the particularity of one set of practices can provide the motivation and direction for more effective and advanced learning. Thus classical rhetoric is of limited value from an LSP perspective. (See Bazerman and Russell (1994) on the persistent historical resistance of rhetoric to considering specialized languages and situations.)

A different rhetorical approach that does attend to some of the particularity of science and technology has been Bruno Latour's political vision of scientific persuasion, presented in *Science in Action* (Latour 1987). He sees the regularities of scientific texts (such as citation patterns, use of numbers, and appeals to the laboratory) and of scientific exchanges (such as raising the stakes in debates so that investigators with lesser resources have to drop out) as resources in trials of strength. He shows how discourse creates alliances and solidifies the strengths of particular communicative networks in ways that make those strengths invincible, pervasive, and invisible.

Latour's account serves as both a critical and a productive rhetoric — that is it helps you to see through the tactics of others and to produce your own tactics. Latour's rhetorical savvy accounts for much of his popularity in science studies, for people find in his work a real feel for how argumentative struggles go in any competitive discourse arena. Several limitations of his approach, however, are consequential for LSP — namely, in attributing too much influence of the heroic individual in reshaping social and communicative relationships, in not attending adequately to the slowly evolving structures of social interchange, in seeing all communicative relations as agonistic power struggles, and in providing an awkward and insufficient way for considering how human discourse is responsive to the resources and pressures of the nonhuman. These limitations direct attention away from genre and other regularities in the form, social organization, and interaction that would help students orient to and learn how to participate in special purpose communications. Further they direct attention away from the representational potential of special languages; that is, by casting relations between text and non-textual actants as totally driven by the need to create power alliances, actant network theory provides little to help us understand meaning or how readers and writers find meanings in texts.

What has been called the North American approach to genre (Freedman and Medway 1994, Russell 1997) provides a way to consider the development of historically evolved specialized social forms in relation to individual actions deploying these forms in concrete historical moments. This tradition of research and theory recognizes that genres are always remade by each individual's novel action and that the discursive spaces within recognized genres create opportunity spaces for individual utterance within ordered social relations and activities. Thus this approach provides means to consider how the specialized languages of disciplines and professions offer the means to make novel contributions to historically unique conversations.

This theory of genre began by linking the rhetorical tradition of genre studies to Schutz's phenomenology of everyday life through the concept of social typifications (Schutz 1967, Schutz and Luckmann 1973, Miller 1984, Bazerman 1988). The linkage between socially evolved, socially recognized forms and individual sense-making and self-expression allows a link between formal approaches to language and the long expressivist tradition of composition studies. We now can recognize more clearly that one learns to express one-self in particular circumstances in particular social fields through recognizable social forms. Identity becomes realized on specific social stages, even if there is a personal backstage that looks out to the several venues of public production.

The North American tradition of genre studies has developed means for considering the emergence and transformations of textual forms; the social roles and interactions mediated through these social forms; the ideological, epistemological, and communicative assumptions realized in these forms; the reading and writing processes associated with particular genres (Bazerman 1988, 1993, 1994, 1997a, 1997b); the persuasive resources of various genres and mixed genres (Journet 1993) the kinds of knowedge expert users of genres deploy in participating in genres (Berkenkotter and Huckin 1995, Freedman 1993, Freedman, Adam and Smart 1994, Prior 1998, Blakeslee 1997); the relations among genres within professions (Devitt 1991, McCarthy 1991, van Nostrand 1994, 1997) the relation between genred textual practices and other non-textual aspects of professional practice (Yates 1989, Schryer 1993) and many other related social phenomena. However, this approach has developed less fully and systematically issues relating to the specific meanings represented within the textual space of genres. That is, while individual analyses of texts have discussed the content of the analyzed texts in relation to the genre, they have not developed genre-relevant concepts for considering how genre shapes representational content. Two major exceptions are the study of specialized persuasive topics embodied within genres (initiated with Miller and Selzer

1985); and the role of taxonomy in establishing meaning categories, particularly with respect to clinical psychology (McCarthy and Geiring 1994; Berkenkotter and Ravotas 1997; Ravotas and Berkenkotter forthcoming).

In the remainder of this paper, I suggest several genre-influenced meaning creating processes that allow us at the micro-level to utter original, situation relevant but still genre appropriate representations, namely: populating space with objects, translation from other systems and discourses, intertextuality, accountability, and operations. To explain what I mean by these concepts I will use as my primary example a creative, individualized utterance within a highly typified, regulated, and coercive discursive field, where there would seem to be little room for self-articulation—the income tax report. This extreme example can show us in stark form how individuality of utterance might play out in other genres, from which I will draw secondary examples.

The concepts I present here have some family resemblance to what Halliday (1982) calls the ideational aspect of text, what Searle (1969) calls the representational act within speech acts, and what classical rhetoric characterizes as the logos of a speech. However, the concepts here specifically provide ways of considering how genre-shaped discursive spaces constrain and provide opportunity for the representation of particular kinds of genre-relevant meanings.

## Regulation and uniqueness

Tax forms are a remarkable kind of self-confession where one reveals intimate details of life to strangers, details that one would not share with friends. After all this confession, one writes a check and mails it off to one's government. Now that is a powerful form of writing. Of course the document does not achieve its self-punishing confessional power entirely by itself as an abstract literary text; it is surrounded by laws, records, accounting systems, criminal justice systems and other resources and contexts that make one accountable for reporting specific information, calculating according to procedures, correlating representations with other orders of representation, and otherwise being mindful of what one says on the tax page. Constrained and directive as the form may be and constraining and compulsive as the surrounding contexts may be, people spend much time thinking through what they will write, and then spend much additional money to hire consultants, accountants, and lawyers to help prepare their self-representations. Great emotions and anxieties may surround the writing of these confessions and awaiting the response of readers in the tax office.

People feel tax forms are where they are most reduced to a faceless number, but tax forms are also where one's most full representation occurs, one's must

full self-articulation — work, affluence, home, family and dependents, charity giving, extra income producing activity and income producing wealth, extraordinary health expenses, travel, and a variety of other activities that might influence one's tax liability. A major strategy for avoiding difficulties is to make oneself in fact non-noticeable, to obscure one's exceptionality or particularity, keeping all one's deductions within standard (but unspoken) guidelines.

This self report is dialogically constructed with the makers of the forms who identify the major categories and terms of self-representation. Much effort and expense goes into the construction of the forms. The dialogic construction is even more complex because one would assume that the evolution of the form is at least in part in relation to the clever stratagems of previous respondents as well as users' complaints and confusions. Moreover, the experience of reading and evaluating prior responses enters into continuing revision of the form and thus the self-representation it produces.

## Generic ontologies and unique objects

Consider the standard United States Individual Income Tax Return, form 1040, for the 1996 tax year (see figures 1 and 2, Appendix pp. 39, 40). First let us consider the category of objects which will populate this discursive universe. Each genre facilitates representation of particular universes of objects, and the particularity of any utterance has in part to do with the particular objects of the appropriate kind one chooses to place in that represented universe. We might call these the ontology of the genre, and the specific ontology of each utterance.

One compulsory object for all filers, reprinted on the top of forms, as in figure 1, is the government. Another object (required by fill-in spaces near the top of the form) is the individual filer (or couple filing jointly) — the tax payer. One can try to keep oneself out of the universe by not filing, or one can file under an alias or otherwise try to disrupt the connection between one's embodied person and the person textually represented in the universe. There are categories of children and adults who need not file, usually based on income, and it is sometimes possible to remain invisible to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). However, there are intertextual and other means of making you accountable for providing an accurate name. Further, addresses representing residences are part of the ontology because the IRS wants to attach the named filer with a body resident at an address, to correlate this document with other documents related to that person as well as to make that embodied person directly accountable for the symbolic representations made in his or her name.

Moreover, the IRS would like to make the ontology as stable as possible—the same people from year to year, identifiable as the same people, statistically likely to be living at the same address—so they provide pre-printed stick-on labels to correlate the person from one year with the next (see figure 1 near the top). Social Security numbers also enter the ontology in the attempt to make the people represented in each year continuous with people in previous and future years. Social Security numbers also establish identities within another system of record-keeping and tax-taking.

There are some legal choices of self-representation within this part of the ontology (that is, thoroughly accountable variations that will not be policed by a variety of coercive means). If one has multiple addresses, one can make a choice, subject to various criteria, of a primary residence. One can also choose to be single, married, or married filing separately. Also there is some flexibility in identifying additional people, characterized as dependents.

Most of the objects requested on these forms are numbers representing money, in turn representing categories of income and expenses. Many of these categories are specifically identified and are directly tied to other documents filed with the government (see, for example, line 7 of figure 1 and line 52 of figure 2). But some categories are more open, based on what you believe you can report without calling undue attention to yourself or for which you believe you can make yourself accountable if called on to do so; for example, gains or losses on rental real estate, farm income, or moving expenses. For some of these elective categories of income and expenses, you may be immediately asked to provide some greater account on additional forms. On these further forms you have some rhetorical choice in how you characterize various items and under what category you will place them. You may even add persuasive descriptions to argue for the deductibility of the item; for example, "travel to conferences and professional meetings" or "home office for preparation of manuscripts and lectures." These elliptical arguments through description can be translated into more extended arguments carried out in tax courts and the appellate court system.

In other domains there are other ontologies, as I have recently become aware of in my study of the discourses surrounding the emergence of incandescent lighting and central power into late nineteenth century America (Bazerman forthcoming). For example, patents have ontologies of inventions, often first introduced as illustrations and then described as components of the illustrated object, inventors, geographic locales, and dates.

In newspaper interviews with Edison, of course, Edison is necessarily part of the ontology, as is usually Menlo Park, but both person and place are frequently treated as wonderful or magic objects; further both are typically associated with other wonderful and magical objects of inventions, experiments, or just ordinary equipment transformed, which fill the geographic space of Menlo Park and come in contact with Edison's personal space. One might place this genre of feature interview stories within a larger genre of feature stories involving exotic and wonderful individuals residing in exotic places, but having some connection to ordinary life. One of the same newspapers that wrote Edison interview stories was sponsoring expeditions to the Arctic and to Africa, going to great expense to plausibly populate stories with wonder-filled exotica and heroic individuals. Further, when such an article appears in a phrenological journal, head size and shape also are a necessary part of the ontology.

#### Translation:

Where do these objects that populate texts come from? Where do the numbers you fill in on the tax forms come from? Well, you could make them up, just making sure the linguistic form is plausibly appropriate. Names should consist of two words and optionally a middle initial, should resemble names within the diverse mix of the American population, and should not obviously appear to be an insulting phrase, the name of a basketball team, or anything else that might call attention to its inappropriacy. Income figures should appear in U.S. dollars expressed in decimal integer form, and again should not take on an extremity of value that would call attention to itself.

So entries must appear in the right form. If you conceive of them in some other form, you must recast them in ways that allow them to be received and recorded within the symbolic universe this document is supposed to produce. If, for example, you wish to insult the tax collector through the address, you must code your insult to look like an address. Income that appears in descriptive words (for example "a large quantity of gold") needs to be quantitized, translated into dollars, and then transcribed in decimal form. Charity giving in kind — such as used clothing given to the Salvation Army — is a typical place that exposes the nature of the translation process, as there is some leeway in the evaluation and who does it.

This is similar to the process in courts where certain objects from the lives of victims and accused are admitted into court, but only that which is admissible by the rules of evidence and translated into the appropriate form to be considered as evidence and entered into the persuasive and deliberative discourse enacted in the court. Similarly Latour and Woolgar (1979) talk about the process of inscription by which mice by a series of translations are transformed into data in a form appropriate to the scientific argument to be made.

The material in Edison's notebooks and the other inventions being cooked up in the lab need to be translated into the form appropriate to a patent. The patentable object need not come from a particular working successful technology, but only from an idea, so it is often easier to trace Edison's patents back to his notebooks than an actual working object or experiment in the lab.

## Intertextuality

Most name and number entered on tax forms are supposed to come from particular other places, and you are held accountable by a variety of means to transcribe these accurately from the appropriate other places. For example, the name you inscribe should be the one on your social security, driver's license, last year's tax returns, and other legal documents.

Often where representations of objects in one system come from is from another text. The stubs on your paychecks or the records in your employer's account books are added up to produce an amount called annual wages. Tips do not have an intertextual trail; as a result frequent tensions arise between the IRS and waiters, street buskers, cab drivers and others who earn gratuities which are not easily and accountably aggregated. Travel expenses, similarly, may only reside in a variety of crumpled receipts which may or may not have been saved, perhaps supplemented by a personal log book. These intertextual resources for preparing your taxes are of varying rigorousness and compulsivity.

Writing an academic paper affords greater degrees of freedom in choosing which intertextual resources can be drawn on and displayed. Some of the idiosyncrasy of Gould and Lewontin's paper is just in their generically inappropriate reliance on such intertextual resources as Voltaire's Candide and analyses of Gothic cathedrals. But even without pushing the boundaries of citation practices of a genre, academic writers have great leeway in tying their work to various parts of the appropriate literature and drawing on various resources made available in the literature. These choices often serve to index the author's intellectual position among the alternatives in the field.

## Accountability

In different genres and the surrounding discoursal practices we may be held accountable for the various representations we make within the generic utterance. So the Internal Revenue Service may make us specifically accountable

for the sources of the numbers we enter. That is, we may be called into their offices in order to provide an account of where we got our numbers from. The kind of account we need to come prepared to give is an intertextual one, with all the relevant records and receipts. Financial and perhaps criminal penalties will result if we fail to come up with a good accounting and intertextual support.

The IRS to ensure accountability collects major parts of the intertextual record in advance, through employers' reports of earnings, statements of miscellaneous earnings, bank and stock broker reports of earnings, and similar filings provided to both the government and the taxpayer. The IRS then correlates those income reports with the personal reports we file on our tax returns. In the central computer our tax returns are made intertextually accountable, and we are reminded if there is any lapse in our set of reported linkages — that is, if we neglect to report some income that someone else has reported giving to us.

The reports sent to the government have already done the work of translating, so that we have no options in how we will represent the intertextual information — rather we just transcribe the provided numbers in designated spaces and must even include copies of some of the intertextual mediating documents, such as the W-2 statement of earnings form. A major tax issue is, of course, what escapes this intertextual web of reporting and how the government can make us accountable for that. This area of irregularly reported transactions is known as the 'grey economy'.

In another example of intertextual accounting, from the Edison papers, patents are accountable not for being workable or effective or profitable, but only for being ideas had by certain people on certain dates, as attested to in the patent. So records of inventive thought, in the form of notebooks, are the appropriate form of intertextual account one can provide in appeals, hearings, and court cases. As a result the pages of the working notebooks are regularly dated, signed, and notarized. Further they are afterwards catalogued, annotated, and correlated with intermediate summary notebooks and with granted patents.

Other kinds of genres may be made accountable to other kinds of realities, but only through mechanisms that textualize or inscribe the non-textual materials so as to translate them into the discourse. Thus it is important for the success of Edison's project not only that he have successful demonstrations illuminating Menlo Park, but that these events were reported on in the newspapers and technical journals, establishing wide-spread and enduring meanings for the financial, corporate, scientific, and public worlds.

The mechanisms of inscription are not arbitrary or without meaning; they are the site at which the inscriptions can be made accountable. Genres that car-

ry their force by appeal to the emotions or experience are held immediately accountable to the self-accounts of the readers — "This moved me; that other left me cold and rung false to human emotion." Statements that hold their force by their claim to be representative of the public will or the union membership are likely to be embarrassed by any misrepresentation or by the changing moods and occasions of group articulation.

Within scientific experimental and observational reports, method provides an account of the way in which inscriptions were produced and thus makes the link between the experiment or the observed event and the inscribed account. Not only must one tell a persuasive story of the method (that is, an account that meets current beliefs and expectations of how to turn events into data) but one is also accountable for having carried out these procedures as described, competently and without falsification, manipulation, or other deviance. After the fact investigations into researchers' ethical conduct may pursue accountability by examining notebooks and searching for corroborating documents, by which experiments and observations were inscribed.

Accountability as well is a resource. One can add strength to one's utterance by increasing the kinds of accountability one opens oneself up to, by displaying mechanisms by which one is holding one's text accountable to various textual or non-textual existences, and by drawing on the strength or dynamic of particular areas considered of consequence by the readers. Thus a preacher in making a sermon accountable to the responsiveness of the congregation by including various eliciting techniques that require the co-participation of the audience can draw on that strength for even greater emotional force on that audience; early demonstrations of emotional response encourage further emotional response.

## Concepts and operations

Once a text is populated with various appropriate objects appropriately translated into its represented world and fully accountable to carry the full force of the other realities represented, the text can then do things with these objects, can transform them further through operations upon the symbols. It can aggregate and divide them; it can show that they form a process or provide evidence for a more general claim; it can calculate consequences. Within each genre, there are certain appropriate operations the text can carry out, and certain domains of abstractions that are appropriate to invoke in carrying them out.

To use the stark example of the tax form, entered numbers are added and subtracted, thereby turning wages, dividends, rental income, alimony and so

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on, into 'total income' (see line 22 figure 1). The total income is then transformed into 'adjusted gross income' through further subtractions (see line 31, fig. 1). 'Adjusted gross income' is next transformed through 'computation of taxes,' and further recombined with 'credits,' 'other taxes,' and 'payments' to determine 'refund' or 'obligation.' Similarly, people can be transformed into 'dependents' and then into 'exemptions,' which in turn have dollar values in the calculations (see figure 1, lines 6a-6d; figure 2 line 36. The various operations lead to conclusions, and the concepts used along the way serve both to define the operations and to identify the higher level entities that result from the operations.

Similarly in patents, the specifics of the object get transformed into generalizable statements of ownership of ideas, known as the 'claims.' These higher level entities of 'claims' become one's intellectual property — but not until the examiner at the patent office carries out operations of evaluation, approval, issuing the patent, and assigning a patent number, again transforming the claim into another kind of entity designated by the patent number.

As another example of the creation of concepts through textual operations, in the *Bulletin of the Edison Electric Light Company*, which served as an early marketing document, anecdotes of fires and suffocation caused by gas lighting were regularly published to invoke fear of the competition; these were set alongside accounts of the safety of electric lighting and approvals of electric lighting by insurance underwriters. These stories were aggregated to build a concept of safety that would be uniquely attributable to electric lighting.

The exploratory and incomplete concepts I have sketched out provide tools to think about how representations are fostered, constrained, and shaped by various genres as well as to consider how those representations are made parts of purposeful individual utterances. Just because we write in genres, and try to speak to the expectations of others, creating recognizable mediating spaces for communication, this does not at all mean we give up our opportunity to create novelty and speak to our moments. Rather, it is those mediating spaces that give us the very means to utter ourselves into new modes and moments of being, to represent ourselves and the worlds we live in.

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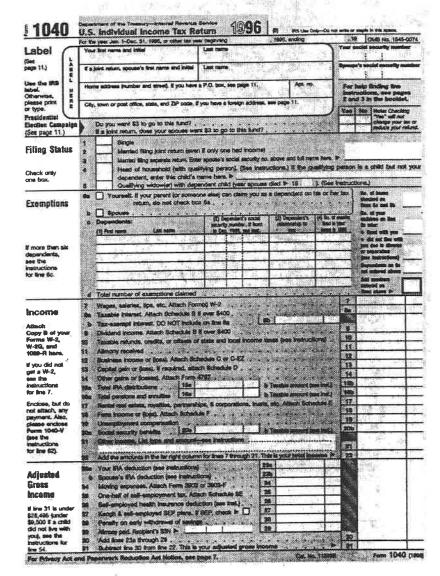


Figure 1

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Figure 2

# Towards Classifying the Arguments in Research Genres

PHILIP SHAW
The Aarhus School of Business

### Introduction

In this paper I want to approach genre from the point of view of text type, and specifically to start from what has been said about argumentation. I use the term text type as van Dijk does, to refer to a limited number of large-scale discourse types such as narrative, expository, directive, descriptive, and argumentative, van Dijk (1992) says these types are 'characterised in semantic and schematic terms' and refers to argumentative schemata as parallel to narrative schemata, seeing them as composed of ordered sequences of elements like premises and conclusions. Genres typically include stretches of text definable, for example, as narrative, and other sections definable as argumentation or exposition. The boundary between these two last categories is not always clear. It may not even be necessary: Martin's categories (1989) of 'Analytical Exposition' and 'Hortatory Exposition' seem to cover the same ground as van Dijk's exposition and argumentation, and thus to dispense with the notion of argumentation. I shall therefore not attempt to distinguish persuasive and expository argumentation at this stage, though my results do point to possible formal differences (see below).

The object of study here is the argumentative elements (in van Dijk's sense) of two academic genres — dissertations and research articles. van Dijk describes argumentation as a textual structure characterised by propositions some of which are in the semantic relation of 'support' to others. Consequently a minimal argument, from a textual point of view, consists of two propositions, one supporting the other. Swans are white is in this sense not argumentative; All swans are white, because I've never seen a black one is an argument.

Large sections of research-reporting genres like the dissertation or the research article are argumentative in the sense that they draw conclusions from