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2 **Genre in Language, Discourse and** 3 4 **Cognition: Introduction to the volume**

5 6 **1 Why a new book on genre?**

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8
9 The notion of ‘genre’ designates a conventional way of performing communica-
10 tive activities using language. Examples of genres include novels, poems, songs,
11 films, news broadcasts, news features, speeches, debates, meetings, classes, con-
12 versations, chat, email, web pages, and so on. All of these are text-based activities
13 that people engage in for a wide variety of reasons and in a broad variety of
14 manners. However, this variation is both enabled *and* restricted by concerted
15 action a constant structure involving language, discourse, and cognition. This
16 is captured by the notion of ‘genre’, which is a well-established concept in com-
17 munication science, discourse studies, stylistics and applied linguistics. Genre
18 has also proven to be a useful concept in the area of language pedagogy and
19 other educational contexts. The concept has a long tradition in the study of arts
20 and rhetoric, dating back to Antiquity.

21 In view of the omnipresence of ‘genre’ across research domains, it is sur-
22 prising that we hardly know how genre *operates* from linguistic, discursal and
23 cognitive points of view. This may be due to the fact that genre is a complex
24 and multifaceted concept, comprising linguistic, pragmatic, and content-related
25 knowledge with psychological, social and communicative aspects, and thus
26 crosses traditional theoretical borders in linguistics and beyond. Another reason
27 may be that research on genre faces a number of empirical problems, one crucial
28 issue being that assumed models are not always unambiguously reflected in the
29 linguistic form of ‘real life’ genre texts and events.

30 This volume intends to explore how recent insights regarding the relation
31 between language, discourse and cognition may contribute to solving a number
32 of long-standing empirical and theoretical problems surrounding the concept of
33 ‘genre’. Examples of such questions are the degree to which genre is anchored
34 in language use, the role of genre in discourse processing, the relationship
35 between the concept of genre and schematic knowledge, etcetera. A second,
36 and closely related goal is to advance our ideas about how to conceptualize
37 and theorize about the role of genre in the study of language, discourse and
38 cognition.

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1 The importance of language as a base-material for constructing genres is
2 beyond doubt. Linguistic regularities play an important role in genres. Yet, a
3 satisfactory account of the role of language in genre construction has been
4 lacking to date. This is a surprising finding, as it is very likely that insights
5 from linguistics will be helpful for understanding how genres are ‘operated’ by
6 their users. Two chapters in this book in particular (De Haan-Vis and Spooren;
7 Martinez Insua) demonstrate how linguistic theoretical concepts can be used
8 both for describing and explaining specific communicative functions associated
9 with genres. When considering the relation between genre and language from
10 the opposite direction, we find that our understanding of the role of genre in
11 language is incomplete, to say the least. How can genre-related linguistic regu-
12 larities be integrated in linguistic theory? The present volume contains a number
13 of chapters investigating how genre phenomena may be integrated with existing
14 theoretical models in construction grammar and frame-semantics (Nikiforidou),
15 and usage-based theory of language (Stukker). Other chapters introduce sophis-
16 ticated research methods such as eye-tracking (Canestrelli, Mak and Sanders)
17 and corpus analysis using logistic regression as a statistical method (De Haan-
18 Vis and Spooren; Li, Sanders and Evers-Vermeul) enabling us to get a more
19 detailed and precise understanding of how exactly language and genre-related
20 factors interact in creating genre phenomena.

21 Another issue concerns the role of genre in situated discourse, including
22 processes of production and reception. The papers in this volume propose to
23 look upon genre as an integral part of human cognition, as has been common
24 for the language system for some decades. In the past we have experienced
25 that many researchers have rejected genre as an important theoretical notion
26 because it introduced so much variation in the study of language and discourse
27 that it seemed impossible to get a grip on that variety. This has resulted in pro-
28 posals that have moved the focus from genre to register (Biber 2006; Biber and
29 Conrad 2009), which strongly emphasize the role of linguistic patterns in differ-
30 entiations between genres. A number of papers in this volume, by contrast,
31 demonstrate that we can consider genre as a cognitive construct and hence
32 that it is the flexibility of the human mind that allows us to deal with the almost
33 infinite variety associated with genre forms manifested in discourse. The book
34 contains chapters that demonstrate how changes in the social or rhetorical con-
35 text of a given genre result in form differences without losing genre integrity
36 (Kuna; Beigman Klebanov, Kaufer, Yeoh, Ishizaki and Holtzman). Two other
37 chapters explore the limits of genre variation: when and why should we view a
38 given member of a genre family as a distinct category? These chapters demon-
39 strate how language users manipulate form aspects in response to changing
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1 social or physical circumstances – in order to negotiate which one of two com-
2 peting genres is being performed in social interaction (McKellin) or indeed to
3 create a completely new genre in digital media (Porto Requejo and Alonso
4 Belmonte).

5 Whereas all of the studies reported in this book provide evidence in favor
6 of the general idea that discourse genres are cognitive constructs, recognized,
7 maintained and employed by members of a given discourse community, an
8 important remaining question is: *how* exactly is genre knowledge organized,
9 stored and handled in cognition? Do language users differentiate among genres
10 on a high level of abstraction using only a small number of binary distinctions
11 such as spoken vs. written and narrative vs. non-narrative modes, as has been
12 suggested by for example Georgakopoulou and Goutsos (1997)? Or are matters
13 more complicated than that and do people have a complex genre repertoire,
14 with distinct schemas for distinct genres including various types of knowledge,
15 as suggested by Steen (2011)? The volume also contains a number of papers
16 addressing the architecture of genre in cognition, investigating potential parallels
17 between the organization of genre knowledge and the more general cognitive
18 structure of frames (Sinding; Nikiforidou; Piata), testing Steen's (2011) model
19 built around the notions of context, text and code (L'Hôte and Debras) or study-
20 ing processes of genre acquisition (Lassen).

23 **2 Background**

25 Our interest does not come out of the blue and is part of a growing body of work
26 on these fundamental issues. It shares with a number of previous book publica-
27 tions (for example Wanner and Dorgeloh (2010) and Halmari and Virtanen
28 (2005)) the ambition to bridge the gap between genre and linguistic theory as
29 well as the ambition to do so by building on converging empirical evidence.
30 But the present volume differs by the fact that it explicitly views grammar as
31 only *one* of the conceptual systems contributing to genre meaning and func-
32 tions. Additionally, whereas a number of important recent contributions to our
33 understanding of genre phenomena have focused on very specific discourse
34 domains – for example Halmari and Virtanen focus on genres within the class
35 of persuasive discourse, Giltrow and Stein (2010) on the structures and functions
36 of internet genres and Bateman (2008) on the multimodal structures and func-
37 tions of documents that comprise one page – our volume includes a larger variety
38 of discourse contexts such as face to face interaction, literary fiction, folk tales,
39 news discourse and medical discourse.
40

1 This broad orientation we share with Biber and Conrad (2009), who focus on
2 corpus analysis of register and style in different genres and text types. However,
3 the present volume differs in that Biber and Conrad solely use a corpus linguistic
4 methodology and restrict themselves to the analysis of (English) language. The
5 chapters in our book volume additionally include psychological processes of
6 discourse production and reception, and the social processes of interaction and
7 represent a larger variety of European and non-European languages.

8 As may be gleaned from these comments, we believe that the broad perspec-
9 tive proposed in the present book volume is a prerequisite for understanding
10 genre in relation to language, discourse and cognition on a more fundamental
11 level. In addition, we believe that the urgency to study genre from different per-
12 spectives has dramatically increased because of the rapid development and evo-
13 lution of genres that we see around us as a consequence of the advent of new
14 media technologies. The notion of genre has been central for many students
15 of language and discourse, stretching back to Aristotle's classic distinction
16 between lyric, epic and dramatic literary texts, but these are particularly exciting
17 times to study genre. We seem to live in a permanent laboratory of emerging and
18 changing genres: twenty years ago we did not envisage a multimodal, multi-
19 channel genre like the Facebook timeline or the health app. 'Genre competence'
20 is important to fully participate in a discourse community. Consequently, a
21 period of 'genre revolution' as we experience right now poses a challenge to
22 that genre competence. Competent participants of discourse communities con-
23 stantly need to adapt their idea of what a genre is. For example, while the older
24 generation is finally accepting email as a standard genre, for younger genera-
25 tions it is rapidly becoming obsolete. As a result, we need to expand Swales'
26 (1990: 58) well-known definition of genre as 'a class of communicative events,
27 the members of which share some set of communicative purposes recognized
28 by the expert members of the discourse community, shaping the schematic
29 structure of the discourse and constraining choices of content and style' to con-
30 sider genre as the multi-faceted, multidimensional and dynamic concept it
31 appears to be, including linguistic, social, and content-related knowledge and
32 is somehow stored in cognition. The chapters in this book set out to explore
33 those different aspects and their interaction in more detail.

34 We bring together researchers from different backgrounds and different
35 paradigms. The contributions to this volume start from a shared assumption
36 that 'genre' is a distinct concept stored in, and handled by human cognition in
37 a way comparable to other conceptual models (frames, scripts, scenarios). But
38 authors differ with respect to their focus of attention on either the linguistic,
39 discursal or cognitive dimension of the concept. The volume contains con-
40 tributions from people working in cognitive linguistics, who discuss issues like:

1 should we look upon genre as a Goldbergian (1995) construction but at a macro
 2 level (Nikiforidou) or as a *frame* in the sense of Fillmore (1982, 1985) (Sinding;
 3 Piata)? How can genre-related linguistic regularities be integrated in a usage-
 4 based cognitive theory of language in the tradition of Bybee and Hopper (2001)
 5 and Barlow and Kemmer (2000) (Stukker)? Cognitive linguistic concepts are
 6 enriched with concepts from neighboring linguistic disciplines such as systemic
 7 functional grammar (Martinez Insua) and sociolinguistics (McKellin). But it also
 8 contains contributions from the field of literary studies, investigating how genre
 9 accounts for interpretational phenomena (Piata; Sinding) and psycholinguistics
 10 investigating actual processing of genre (Canestrelli et al.) It contains contribu-
 11 tions from anthropology (McKellin), corpus linguistics (Li et al.; De Haan-Vis and
 12 Spooren, and educational psychology (Beigman Klebanov et al). The contributions
 13 in this volume range from topics like the conceptualization of genre through
 14 the dynamic nature of genre (Kuna; Martinez Insua; Porto Requejo and Alonso
 15 Belmonte; De Haan-Vis and Spooren) to the acquisition and identification of
 16 genre (Lassen; Beigman Klebanov et al.; L'Hôte and Debras), and the relation
 17 between genre and linguistic variation (Li et al; Canestrelli et al.; Stukker). We
 18 believe that bringing together these different perspectives and approaches build-
 19 ing on a shared foundation of more general insights from the cognitive sciences
 20 is an important first step in getting to understand the multifaceted nature of
 21 genre.

22 These different backgrounds and paradigms also exhibit a rich variety in
 23 research methodologies. The volume presents research that uses sophisticated
 24 qualitative and quantitative analyses and experimentation, from ethnographic
 25 genre analysis to the study of eye movements, from hypothetical-inductive lin-
 26 guistic analysis to large-scale quantitative corpus analysis. By combining these
 27 research strategies the volume allows for a more refined empirical under-
 28 standing of the genre concept in relation to language, discourse and cognition,
 29 its interactions and its representation in the linguistic system and in human
 30 cognition, as well as its operation in real life discourse processes.

32 **3 How is the book organized?**

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 35 The volume's central questions are: What does genre knowledge consist of; how
 36 is it organized and stored in cognition, how is it applied in discourse production
 37 and interpretation, and how is it reflected in language use? It starts from the
 38 assumption that linguistic variation, and interaction between interpretive sources
 39 of various nature (content, grammar, social context) should not be viewed as
 40 'problems', but instead as a fundamental characteristic of human cognition

1 and communication. The chapters in this volume each take either language, dis-
 2 course or cognition as their starting point, and establish connections with one or
 3 both of the other facets. The volume is subdivided into three parts accordingly.

6 3.1 Section 1: Genre in language

7 The ‘genre in language’ part of the book focuses on the nature of the linguistic
 8 regularities characterizing genres. Questions addressed include: How can we
 9 use linguistic theoretical concepts to more adequately understand genre phe-
 10 nomena? How can linguistic regularities associated with genre be integrated
 11 in linguistic theory? What does commonly assumed interaction of genre with
 12 language exactly look like?

13 In linguistic theory, genre has traditionally been regarded as an epiphenomenon.
 14 Grammar – the ‘rules’ you need to know in order to master a language –
 15 and genre – a conventional way of performing an established communicative
 16 activity using language– have traditionally been viewed as distinct phenomena.
 17 Grammatical rules (e.g. ‘use present tense to refer to an event that overlaps with
 18 the moment of speaking’) are assumed to reside deeply entrenched in human
 19 cognition, and to apply to small linguistic patterns, typically sentences. Genre,
 20 on the other hand, refers to the level of discourse, to linguistic units typically
 21 larger than one sentence. It refers to the phenomenon that the same event in
 22 reality may be put into words differently, depending on the communicative func-
 23 tion the text has to fulfill; for example a news report (*Tuesday night a resident of*
 24 *Oak Street caught a burglar in the act*), or a crime story (*Cautiously she advanced*
 25 *through the dark corridor to the kitchen door and gasped for breath: someone*
 26 *was rummaging through the kitchen drawers!*). Despite obvious commonalities
 27 between the objects of study of linguistic theory and genre theory – for one
 28 thing: sentence grammar and genre rules may be perceived as systems of con-
 29 ventions in highly similar ways – attempts at integrating theoretical concepts
 30 from both research traditions are rare.

31 The first three chapters in this book part enrich linguistic theory by extend-
 32 ing linguistic theoretical concepts to genre phenomena. **Li, Sanders and Evers-**
 33 **Vermeul** show that genre conventions sometimes do, and sometimes don’t
 34 affect usage patterns of causal connectives in Chinese. The authors conclude
 35 that the degree of genre-sensitivity depends on the robustness of the semantic
 36 profiles of the connectives. A mechanism of pragmatic strengthening explains
 37 why genre affects interpretation of connectives having a non-specific profile,
 38 whereas the conceptual import of connectives having a specific profile remains
 39 constant across genres. The methodology that the authors use is loglinear analysis
 40

1 of corpus data, enabling them to compare the relative weight of conceptual factors
2 belonging to the inherent semantics of the connective and conceptual factors
3 belonging to genre.

4 **Canestrelli, Mak and Sanders** also investigate the interaction between
5 genre and linguistic conventions for causal connectives, in Dutch news genres.
6 They use an eye movement paradigm to investigate experimentally to what
7 extent the reader's awareness of the genre he or she is reading affects the inter-
8 pretation and processing of causal connectives. They show that the interpreta-
9 tion of so-called subjective connectives crucially involves the representation of
10 a perspective or mental space, a process which is reflected in longer eye fixa-
11 tions. They also show that the presence of cues signaling persuasive genres
12 leads to longer reading times. The authors use Mental Spaces Theory to account
13 for their results.

14 The chapter by **Stukker** reports a corpus-based study of the Dutch Simple
15 Present tense across genres. Her findings suggest that the concept of genre
16 does not only affect patterns of *use* of the Simple Present, but that it may addi-
17 tionally affect the *meaning potential* of this linguistic form. She proposes to treat
18 genre within usage-based linguistic theory, introducing the functional dimen-
19 sion of language use to the set of situational concepts defining linguistic con-
20 ventions, on a par with the social and culture-historical dimensions usually
21 focused on in the usage-based theoretical framework.

22 Two other chapters demonstrate how linguistic theoretical concepts can be
23 used both for describing and explaining specific communicative functions asso-
24 ciated with genres. Analyzing a corpus of early modern English medical texts
25 (1500–1700 roughly) **Martinez Insua** shows how the concept of 'textual meta-
26 function', originating from the Sydney School of systemic functional linguistics
27 (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004) is helpful to account for a selection among the
28 possible discourse organizing functions of the initial position of clauses – called
29 'theme' – and the intended audience of a text. Typical of SFG approaches to the
30 study of language is the strong focus on the social function of language, an
31 aspect of language use that has been claimed to be lacking in cognitive ap-
32 proaches to language, although the current trend towards socially informed
33 cognitive linguistics (Geeraerts and Kristiansen 2014) seems to bridge this gap
34 (see also McKellin, this volume).

35 The chapter by **De Haan-Vis and Spooren** bridges the gap between the
36 book themes 'Genre in language' and 'genre in discourse'. The authors use the
37 linguistic concept of subjectivity to investigate how a variety of Dutch news genres
38 adapted to a broader societal tendency towards 'informalization' (Fairclough
39 1994). A large-scale corpus analysis is conducted to investigate the diachronic
40 development of a number of Dutch news genres over a period of 50 years

1 (1950–2000). The authors use logistic regression as a statistical analysis, a
 2 sophisticated quantitative method of analysis which enables them to chart
 3 detailed interactions between usage patterns of linguistic elements, genre con-
 4 ventions and changing conventions regarding informalization and subjectivity
 5 in news discourse.

8 3.2 Genre in discourse

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 10 The ‘genre in discourse’ part of the book focuses on aspects of the communi-
 11 cative functions characterizing genres. The issues discussed include: how does
 12 genre as a cognitive phenomenon contribute to our understanding of communi-
 13 cative activities using language? And how does the nature of communicative
 14 activities inform our understanding of genre? The chapters in this theme fruit-
 15 fully use knowledge and methods from neighboring disciplines such as anthro-
 16 pology, sociology, cultural history, literary studies and educational psychology.
 17 This part of the book contains a number of chapters that deal with the way
 18 genres change and develop over time and with the emergence of new genres.

19 **Beigman Klebanov, Kaufer, Yeoh, Ishizaki and Holtzman** investigate on
 20 the basis of a corpus of more than 500 student essays whether the linguistic
 21 form of an argumentative genre varies in accordance with characteristics of
 22 the broader social context. The authors use measures from information theory
 23 and information retrieval to quantify genre differences between sets of texts.
 24 They find that argumentative writing in contexts differing in time pressure and
 25 urgency is highly public, academic, reasoned, and non-descriptive. These char-
 26 acteristics of argumentative writing survive a significant change in the writing
 27 context, thereby supporting the viability of genre, or common purpose of writing,
 28 as a stable characteristic of texts with a systematic linguistic manifestation.
 29 However, it is also found that arguments written for assessment exhibit the
 30 characteristic properties of argumentative writing to an even greater extent
 31 than argumentative writing for a course assignment. Taken together, the results
 32 provide empirical evidence that writing in a particular genre has a decisive
 33 impact on the rhetorical choices, yet, in a given context, genre operates in inter-
 34 action with other characteristics of the context.

35 **Kuna** sees genres as flexible, open categories. They emerge, change and
 36 possibly disappear as dictated by the social-communicative demands of their
 37 users. This paper demonstrates the cognitive approach to genres through the
 38 analysis of a corpus of early (16th and 17th century) Hungarian medical recipes.
 39 The analysis focuses primarily on recipes as linguistic and textual products in
 40 the context of their social and communicative conditions, and demonstrates the
 viability of viewing genres as complex cognitive schemas or scripts.

1 **Piata** extends the conception of genre as a commonly shared cognitive
 2 schema to processes of production and interpretation of poetic discourse. Build-
 3 ing on the tradition of the newly developing of schema poetics (Stockwell 2002)
 4 the author views genre (in particular, literature) as a schematic mental repre-
 5 sentation that is shared among language users and guides their interaction
 6 with literary texts. On the basis of linguistic data in Modern Greek poetry, the
 7 author aims to demonstrate that schema poetics lends itself to a conceptual inte-
 8 gration analysis in the form of a grounding box of poetry that is involved in the
 9 conceptual integration of frame structure in metaphorical expressions of time.

10 Two other chapters investigate how language users manipulate form aspects
 11 in response to changing social or physical circumstances. **McKellin** focuses
 12 on communicative processes of genre, treating it as a form of social action.
 13 The chapter explores genre, discourse, and social interaction by investigating
 14 the oral traditions of the Managalase of Papua New Guinea and the dynamics
 15 of an indirect form of rhetoric that politically sophisticated men and women
 16 employ in social and political negotiations – a genre named *ha'a*. Stories told
 17 in this genre are ambiguous, often referred to as “trick” stories that are used to
 18 avoid direct confrontation when negotiating social and political relations. In a
 19 detailed qualitative analysis of instantiations of *ha'a* giving attention to both
 20 genre and interaction, McKellin juxtaposes two aspects of language: the con-
 21 ventional expectations conveyed by genre and the emerging dynamics of com-
 22 municative interaction among individuals- speakers, writers, and their respective
 23 audiences, as mediated by their utterances and texts.

24 The chapter by **Porto Requejo and Alonso Belmonte** investigates the
 25 emergence of ‘newsbites’ as a genre in digital news discourse. A corpus of news-
 26 bites as instantiated in on-line mainstream Spanish newspapers was considered
 27 and explored to ground the maturity of this digital news genre as the product of
 28 the social interaction with the virtual community of users. Their analysis evidences
 29 that newsbites have evolved into a conventional structure on its own and that
 30 this development is the result of the needs and expectations of the readers as
 31 well as the constraints and requirements of the digital medium.

33 3.3 Genre in cognition

35 In themselves, any of the studies reported in this book provides evidence in
 36 favor of the general idea that discourse genres are cognitive constructs, recog-
 37 nized, maintained and employed by members of a given discourse community.
 38 The chapters addressing the ‘genre in cognition’ theme, however, specifically
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1 focus on the question exactly *how* genre, taking into account its many facets, is
2 represented in human cognition. This part of the book presents a number of
3 papers that each discusses how we should conceptualize the role of genre vis-
4 à-vis language, discourse and cognition. Each specifies in its own way what it
5 means that genres are conventional ways of performing communicative activities
6 using language, drawing on a variety of theoretical frameworks and genres.

7 Cognitive perspectives on genre can draw on research on categorization to
8 understand how people categorize texts for various purposes, and try to account
9 for those categorizations by describing the parameters on which they are based,
10 and how those parameters are organized. In this spirit, **Sinding** attempts a
11 theoretical model of genre that organizes genre parameters in terms of the con-
12 cept of “frame”. This model is oriented to the phenomenon of genre mixture,
13 which occurs in many ways in many kinds of genres. The model can help
14 characterize particular genres, or the genres of particular texts or parts of texts.

15 **Nikiforidou** integrates linguistic and cognitive aspects of genre in the
16 linguistic theoretical framework of construction grammar. She proposes that a
17 constructional approach to genre can model the relationship between form and
18 (communicative) function in terms of Fillmorean (1982, 1985) frames, which
19 contain conceptual and interactional structure along with frame-evoking (possibly
20 frame-specific) language. The concept of framing, enriched with constructional
21 methodology, is thus used to capture some of the factors involved in speakers’
22 knowledge of genre. In a constructional approach linguistic, cognitive, and dis-
23 coursual parameters are of equal importance, which in turn has implications for
24 the analysis of genre.

25 The chapter by **L’Hôte and Debras** applies Steen’s (2011) genre model com-
26 prising context, text and code to a corpus of British party conference speeches.
27 They show that awareness of the genre conventions of the British party conference
28 speech comprising context, text and code is a prerequisite for understanding
29 seemingly divergent elements as a coherent whole. The authors take a multi-
30 modal perspective on genre, showing that genre functions associated with the
31 genre of political speeches are actualized not only by using language, but also
32 by gesturing by and facial expression of the speaker and audience reactions
33 (applause, laughter, etc.) Based on a large corpus of recent texts (1994–2013)
34 and a video recording of Tony Blair’s 2006 speech to the Labour party conference,
35 the study combines quantitative and qualitative analyses, and includes vocal
36 and visual aspects of speech delivery.

37 **Lassen** studies how students acquire genre knowledge, exploring how
38 novices use recognizable patterns to make claims about generic structure, and
39 what may guide them in assigning a text to a genre category in situations when

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1 they do not have access to a relevant model for analyzing genre. How do novice
 2 students without prior knowledge of a specific genre manage to assign it to a
 3 genre category? To what extent do top performing students adapt acquired
 4 knowledge of genre theory and genre analysis methods to new learning situa-
 5 tions compared to low performing students? And what may explain possible dif-
 6 ferences in adaptation performances by the two groups of students? To answer
 7 these questions the author draws on a discourse analysis of a sample of 55
 8 undergraduate exam papers testing students' competences in genre analysis.

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