

Impact Case Study - A New Academic Genre & What it Says About Researchers

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What do characteristics of a genre tell about the community which creates it?

Genre analysts have often argued that the qualities of a genre depend on its communicative function (Swales 1990, 58). In this paper, I reverse the order of reasoning and ask **what kind of function does the genre of 'Impact Case Study' serve? What image of the academic profession does it create?**

An emerging genre...

The genre of "Impact Case Study" was constructed by the activity of a wide community of practitioners. There are many elements which differ from case to case (eg. styles of referencing), but some common features include :

- Focus on numbers : size of audience, amount of funding, clicks...
- Use of 'impact speak' : 'impact' as verb or as plural, "pathways to impact", "cycle from research output to impact".
- Use of superlatives : novel, ground-breaking, innovative, major, excellent...

Macrostructure

Impact narratives seem to follow a common 'plot' : Situation - Problem - Response – Evaluation (Hoey, 1994).
See **handout** for examples!

Vision of research conveyed by Impact Case Studies

- Research as linear and goal-oriented, problems and obstacles minimal
- Value of research easily grasped on basis of indicators (reviews, funding, publication in prestigious journal, award...)
- Most research is 'excellent'
- Impact as part of research, embedded in the design from the onset

But what do academics themselves say about these changes in discourse?

In the other part of my PhD I look at interviews with academics to see if they present 'impact' as part of their professional ethos and to which sphere it would belong: institutional, scientific or personal.

Look out for my next papers to learn more!

Bibliography, more details & examples

can be found in the handout.
Thanks for your interest!

Conclusions

The genre of Impact Case Study normalizes 'impact' as an inherent part of 'good' research, prescribes ways of writing about it, and brings to life a new academic subject position – the 'impactful' scholar.
But who exactly is (s)he?

