

Articles

As I am reading “The Concept of Discourse Communities” by John Swale, all I can think about is “what is this guy talking about?” His writing is very formal, and some of the words I have never heard of. Many times I had to re-read a sentence and look up words. I realize though that he is probably writing to other scholars who are also addressing this topic. His audience may have the same level of education as he does, and are also literary researchers. Obviously his readers know what he is talking about because I do not understand what he is trying to say in the way that he is writing it.

I do know that he is a professor of linguistics at the University of Michigan and received his Ph.D. from Cambridge University. His career has been focused on working with nonnative English speakers on strategies to help them succeed as readers and writers for the university. This clears up his purpose for writing this book. The reason I am reading this is not only because it was required, but because it will help me to be more aware and critically engaged when conversing with different groups. Swales is trying to teach us how to identify these “discourse communities” and respond appropriately. In other words, it matters so that you can affectively communicate with the people of certain groups.

I also started to read the article by Carolyn Miller and I felt the same as I did with John Swale. Our class discussion helped me understand what these professionals are trying to say. There are all these different rhetorical situations that we can categorize into genres and analyze them. When I am at work, I have to be professional. I have to dress a certain way, I have to be outgoing, and I can't be lazy. In a different setting these characteristics will change according to the situation. If I was to act like I do at home at the work place, I would get fired, or have a serious intervention.

For people who cannot recognize these differences in social settings, they will have a harder time receiving the response they are looking for.