The Difference Between Genres and Text Types

Genres and text types generally apply to written text, although they can certainly represent oral language as well. To make a distinction, we arbitrarily view writing development for ELLs from the perspective of genres. The term genre applies to written texts that are categorized on the basis of similar linguistic criteria—mysteries, blogs, poems, recipes, and editorials, to name a few, are different genres. Each genre serves a distinct communicative purpose. Derewianka (1991) refers to recounts, narratives, information, reports, explanations, and arguments as her genre categories. Text types, on the other hand, represent groupings of texts that have similar linguistic forms, regardless of their genre (Biber, 1988; Swales, 1990, Martin, 1992).

The line is blurred when it comes to the definitions of these two terms. College and career readiness standards for English language arts, for example, generally use text types for reading. In grades K-5, the text types under literature often include stories...