

PBI207

Genre

in Three Traditions

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Approaches to genre

- Three major approaches:
 - Systemic-Functional view (Martin, 1992)
 - New Rhetoric view
 - ESP view

SFG Approach

A genre is:

... a staged, goal-oriented social process.
Participants interact using language in a
conventional staged structure (Martin, 1992)

Genres are:

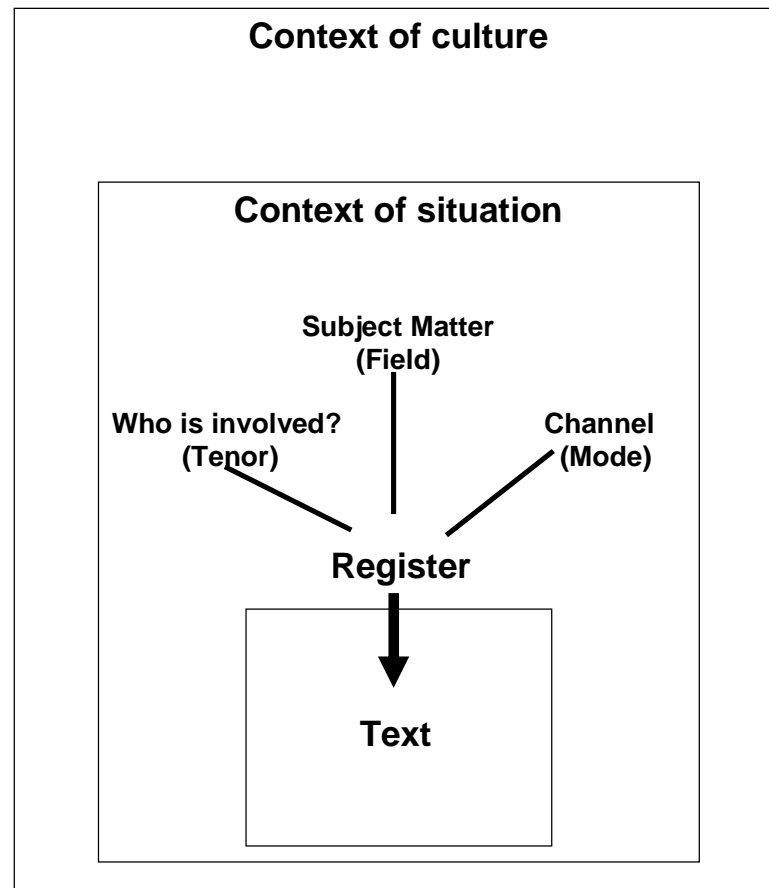
- social: members of a culture interact to achieve them
- staged: meanings are made in steps
- goal-oriented: rhetorical structures have evolved to serve social purposes

SFG theoretical framework

Texts are connected to contexts through:

- genre
- register
- Genre: writer makes choices regarding
 - purpose
 - structure
- Register: writer makes choices regarding
 - Field: social activity in which people are involved; what text is about
 - Tenor: relationship between participants
 - Mode: role of language (written, written and spoken, written plus illustrations, electronic, etc)

The SFL view: Genres and registers



A model of text in context

Derewianka 2000



SFG: How do genres differ?

Texts are similar or different because of:

- the sociocultural purposes they serve
- the ways they are structured

ie: texts which have a similar purpose and structure constitute a genre



Primary or elemental genres

Eight primary or elemental genres recognised:

- narrative
- recount
- information report
- explanation
- procedure
- exposition (argument)
- discussion
- description

Genres: Purpose and structure

- **Narrative**

- Purpose: to entertain
- Structure: orientation ^ complication ^ resolution ^ (coda)

- **Recount**

- Purpose: to tell what happened
- Structure: orientation ^ record of events ^ reorientation
(Personal comments and/or evaluative remarks interspersed throughout)

- **Information report**

- Purpose: to describe entire class of things, natural or made: mammals, the planets, plants, computers etc
- Structure: general statement identifies subject eg defining and classifying it ^ description eg features, behaviour, types

Genres: Purpose and structure

- **Explanation**
 - Purpose: how and why things occur in scientific and technical fields
 - Structure: statement of phenomenon ^ explanation sequence ^ (concluding statement) May include diagrams
- **Procedure**
 - Structure: Goal ^ materials ^ method
 - Purpose: describe how something is done
- **Exposition**
 - Purpose: argue for or against a particular position
 - Structure: Statement of position ^ arguments ^ reinforcement of position statement
 - Each argument stage consists of a 'point' and 'elaboration' where argument is supported by evidence



Genres: Purpose and structure

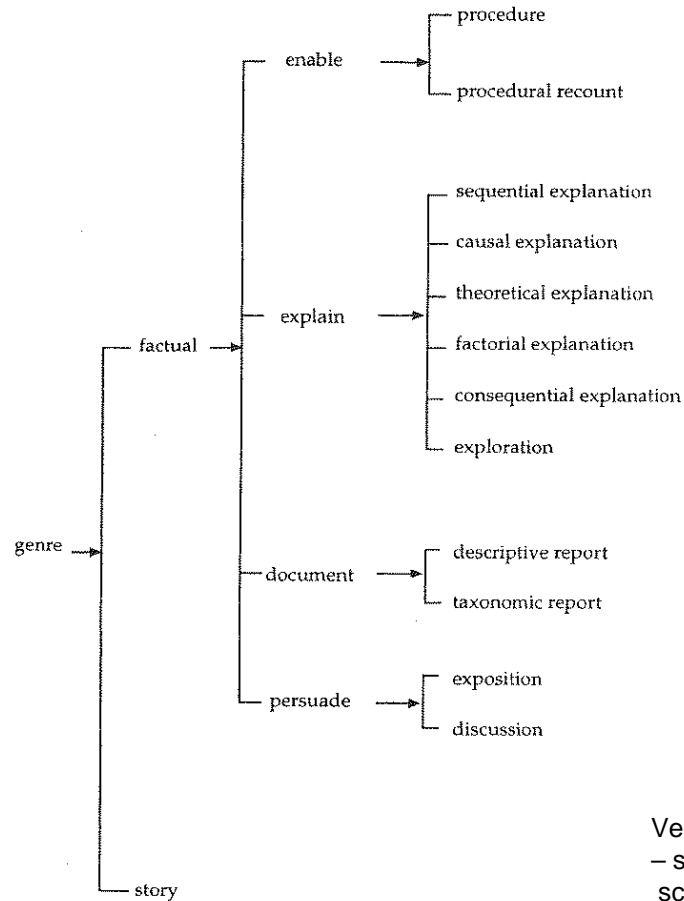
Discussion

- Purpose: Examine different approaches (sides) to an issue before coming to an informed decision.
- Structure: statement outlining the issue (background information) ^ arguments for and against ^ conclusion

Description

- Purpose: identify characteristic features of a particular thing
- Structure: Introduction to the subject ^ characteristic features eg physical appearance, qualities, habitual behaviour, significant attributes

Examples of genre families



Veel, R. (1997). Learning how to mean – scientifically speaking: apprenticeship into scientific discourse in the secondary school. In F. Christie, F. and J. Martin. *Genre and Institutions*. London: Cassell p.171

Figure 6.4 Genres in secondary school science

Genre families

Table 6.1 Social purpose and generic structure of genres in school science

Genre	Social purpose	Stages
procedure	To enable scientific activity, such as experiments and observations, to occur	Aim^ Materials needed^ Steps
procedural recount	To recount in order and with accuracy the aim, steps, results and conclusion of a scientific activity	Aim^ Record of Events^ Conclusion

Veel, R. (1997). Learning how to mean – scientifically speaking: apprenticeship into scientific discourse in the secondary school.

In F. Christie, F. and J. Martin. *Genre and Institutions*. London: Cassell p.172

Genre families

sequential
explanation

To explain how something occurs or is produced – usually observable sequences of activities which take place on a regular basis

Phenomenon
identification[^]
Explanation sequence
(consisting of a
number of phases)

causal
explanation

To explain why an abstract and/or not readily observable process occurs

Phenomenon
identification[^]
Explanation sequence
(consisting of a
number of phases)

factorial
explanation

To explain events for which there are a number of simultaneously occurring causes

Phenomenon
identification[^]
Factor [1–n]

theoretical
explanation

To introduce and illustrate a theoretical principle and/or to explain events which are counter-intuitive

Phenomenon
identification/
Statement of theory[^]
Elaboration [1–n]

consequential
explanation

To explain events which have a number of simultaneously occurring effects

Phenomenon
identification[^]
Effects [1–n]

Genre families

exploration	To account for events for which there are two or more viable explanations	Issue [^] Explanation 1 [^] Explanation [2-n]
descriptive report	To describe the attributes, properties, behaviour, etc. of a single class of object	General statement [^] Description
taxonomic report	To describe a number of classes of thing in a system of classification	General statement [^] Description
exposition	To persuade the reader to think or act in particular ways	Thesis [^] Arguments 1-n [^] Reinforcement of Thesis
discussion	To persuade the reader to accept a particular position on an issue by considering more than one perspective	(for example) Issue [^] Dismissal of opponent's position [^] Arguments for own position [^] Recommendation



Macrogenres

- A macrogenre is composed of two or more elemental genre

Eg a chapter in a textbook may consist of explanations, expositions, procedures etc.

New Rhetoric view

- New Rhetoric researchers (eg Bazerman, 1994; Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995; Prior, 1998) focus on expert users
- Genres are forms of social action; centred 'not on the substance or the form of the discourse but on the action it is used to accomplish' (Miller, in Hyland 2004).
- Interest in context rather than text
- Interest in power:
 - what genres are powerful and how do they become so?
 - How are genres used to exclude?
 - What kinds of social organisation are created and maintained by genres? etc



New Rhetoric in the classroom

- Skepticism about teaching genres in the classroom
 - Reinforces existing power relations (cf SFL view)
 - Knowledge of genres acquired in practice, in specific socio-cultural environments. Teaching reduces genre knowledge to imitation of forms



ESP Approach

- ESP approach is eclectic, drawing on various theories.
- Like the SFL approach, it is text-based
- Like the NR, it emphasises role of social communities



ESP approach

Swales (1990) Genres are:

... a class of communicative events linked by shared purposes recognised by members of a particular community. These purposes are the rationale of the genre and help to shape the ways it is structured and the choices of content and style it makes



ESP approach

- Genres are purposeful social actions used and recognised by community members to achieve a particular purpose for a particular audience in a particular context
- A discourse community shares common genres

Common genres in EAP

- Research articles
- Conference abstracts
- Grant proposals
- Undergraduate essays
- Textbooks

And ... ?

Can you add 5 more?

How discipline-specific is each?



Swales: The CARS model

- Swales (1990) described the structure of the introduction to a research article (RA) using the acronym CARS:
Carving Out a Research Space



Structure of RA introduction (CARS)

Move 1: Establish a territory

- . Claim centrality
- . Make topic generalisations
- . Review previous research

Move 2: Establish a niche

- . Counter-claim
- . Indicate a gap
- . Raise a question
- . Continue a tradition


Move 3: Occupy a niche

- . Outline purpose or announce present research
- . Announce present findings
- . Indicate RA structure

Genre Vs Text types

Douglas Biber (1988, 1995) found that the same genre can differ considerably in terms of linguistic features. By the same token, different genres can be quite similar linguistically. Based on Biber's research,¹ it is clear that the terms 'genre' and 'text type' can be used to distinguish two quite different but complementary perspectives on authentic texts.

Brian Paltridge (1996) has drawn our attention to an odd imbalance in teaching practice:



Recent years have seen increased emphasis being placed on the notion of genre in the language learning classroom. Less attention, however, has been given to the notion of 'text type'.

Paltridge argues that the distinction between 'genre' and 'text type' is “an important and useful one” for teaching purposes. He presents analyses of a number of texts from two genre-based course books, one which focuses on adult second language literacy development and the other on writing in an academic context. He goes on to suggest ways in which the relationship between genres and text types can be exploited in the language learning classroom.

Some Definitions/Distinctions from Paltridge (1996)

A **genre** is a socially recognized type of literate activity such as, for example, a prayer, a sermon, a recipe, a song, or a poem. **Text types**, on the other hand, represent groupings of texts **similar in terms of the co-occurrence of linguistic features and patterns of features**.

Paltridge (1996) writes that, for Biber, the term 'genre' classifies texts on the basis of external criteria, while the phrase 'text types' identifies groups of texts which are similar in linguistic form, irrespective of genre.

In fact, Biber (1995, 1988) chiefly uses the term “register” by which he means linguistic varieties which are conditioned by situational context (i.e. not subject-matter). For Biber, production circumstances (i.e. situational context), and communicative functions are the principal factors influencing variation in language. Biber tracks both grammatical and functional categories, ranging from **tense** and **aspect** through **clause subordination** and **negation**.

A genre may contain one or more examples of text types, as Paltridge illustrates in Table 1 below (1996:):

Table 1.

Table 1: Examples of genres and text types (based on Hammond et al. 1992)

Genre	Text type
Recipe	Procedure
Personal letter	Anecdote
Advertisement	Description
Police report	Description
Student essay	Exposition
Formal letter	Exposition
Formal letter	Problem-Solution
News item	Recount
Health brochure	Procedure
Student assignment	Recount
Biology textbook	Report
Film review	Review

It is clear from this analysis that more than one genre may share the same type. That is, the genres of advertisements and police reports may both share the text type of description. Equally, a single genre, such as formal letters, may be associated with more than one text type; in this case, exposition and problem-solution.

Genre and Text Type in the Classroom (1)

As noted above, Paltridge has argued that “the distinction between genre and text type is an important and useful one for language learning classrooms”. More recently Ann Johns (2002) has edited a volume entitled: *Genre in the Classroom: Multiple Perspectives*, which contains numerous articles addressing the same question: how can genre knowledge best be taught and acquired? However, it should not be forgotten that the tasks and exercises in Swales and Feak (1994; 2004) embody many of the suggestions made there and elsewhere (incidentally, the volume in question contains an article by Swales on teaching the literature review).

Genre and Text Type in the Classroom (2)

Paltridge (1996) argues that there are many ways in which the differences between genres and text types can be exploited in the language classroom. Many of the suggestions made in the literature on the teaching of genre, dealing with the generic structure of texts, can be applied to the teaching of textual structures.

In addition, generic structures and text structures may be compared and contrasted Students, for example, may be presented with a number of genre and text type categories and asked to select the appropriate category for a particular text. They may then be given a list of generic and text structure components and asked to locate them within the text.

Genre and Text Type in the Classroom (3)

Conversely, students may be presented with the generic and text structure components of a text, and asked to reconstruct the text from these and a list of key content words and concepts. Other tasks may involve students arranging sections of a text on the basis of generic and text structure information provided. Students may, equally, be given a number of examples of a particular genre and asked to identify the generic structure and associated text type/s on the basis of their examination of the texts. In this way students can explore the characteristic features of particular genres, and the sorts of variation that occur within them.

What do genre theorists agree on?

- Genres develop as a result of the recurrent ways people do things in social groups
- Because groups are stable, stable genres also develop, giving coherence and meaning to social experience
- Genres have linguistic characteristics that are not fully determined by context or genre, but also not fully under control of writer
- Texts are influenced by communities and cultures; they are not simply products of individual imagination



What do genre theorists agree on?

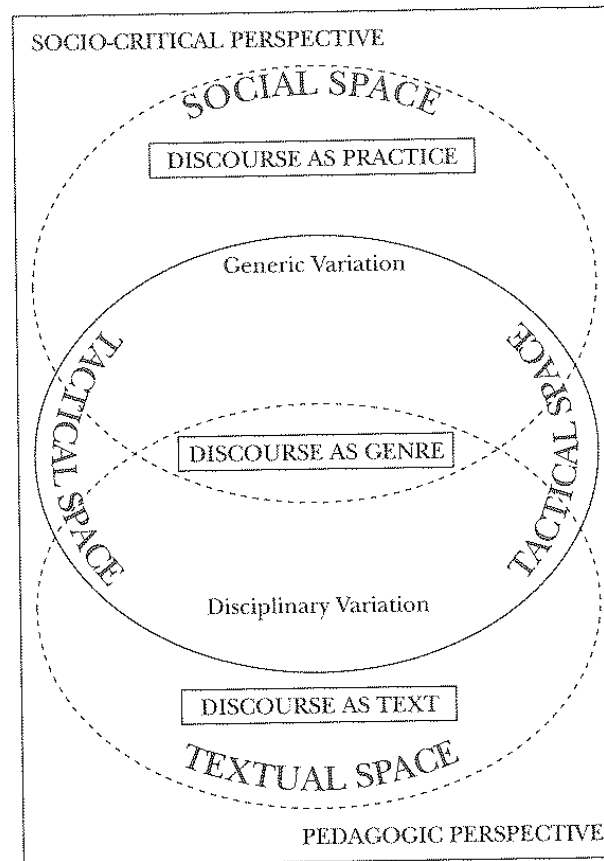
- An understanding of genre involves both form and content: appropriacy for a particular purpose
- Language should be taught together with function in specific context
- Genres are social: different genres carry different degrees of power and status
- Knowledge of text characteristics and their power should be included in writing syllabuses

(from Hyland 2004:51)

Reconciling views of genre: Bhatia

- Bhatia (2002) points out that genres are embedded in disciplinary or professional practice and are recognised and named by members of the discourse community in which they are embedded
- However, universities are increasingly interdisciplinary: ie students study across as well as within disciplines, meaning that they are expected to use the genres of two or more disciplinary communities
- From the pedagogic point of view, there is therefore a tension between broad-based EAP and the more discipline specific ESP/ESAP

Bhatia (2002: 30): Perspectives on generic variation



1.1 Perspectives on generic variation



Bhatia (2002) Comparing academic genres

Consider

- **Discourse content:** purpose
- **Participant relationship:** between reader and writer
- **Discourse characteristics:** eg use of rhetorical devices, rhetorical function of discourse
- **Discourse strategies:** Ways in which the text is organised and presented, use of diagrams, pictures etc.

Bhatia (2002: 30): Variation in academic discourse

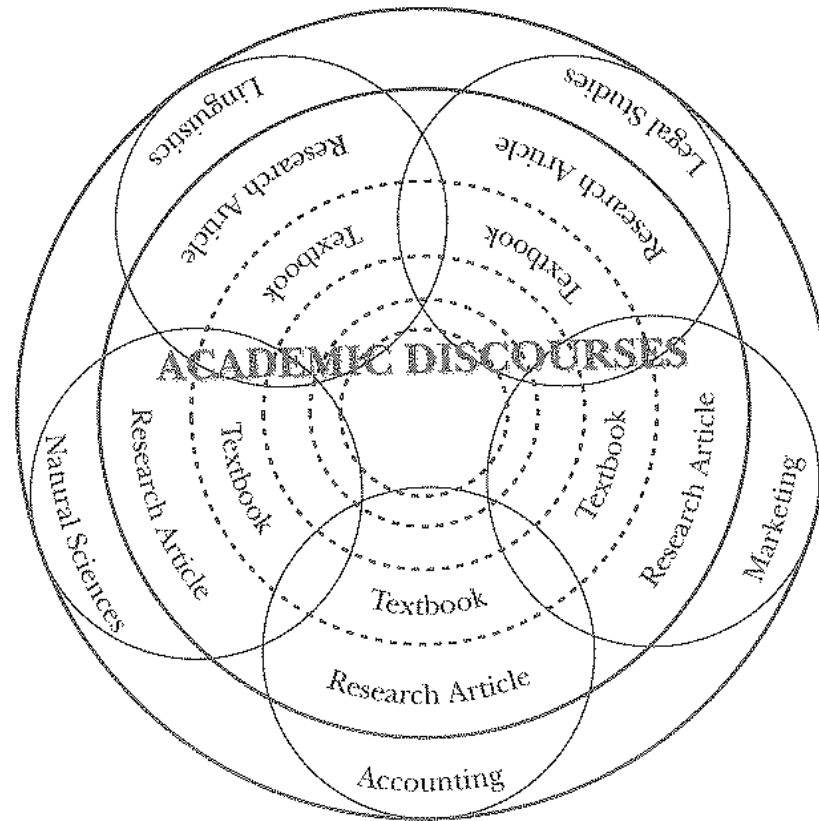


Figure 1.2 Variations in academic discourse