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Methodological Issues in Genre Analysis[1]

1.   Introduction

Although genre analysis is a relatively recent development in the field of discourse and communication studies, it has become extremely popular in the last few years. As Candlin (1993) asks,

> *What is it about the term and the area of study it represents that attracts such attention? What is it that will bring together under one terminological roof literary scholars, rhetoricians, sociologists, cognitive scientists, machine translators, computational linguists and discourse analysts, ESP specialists and language teachers? What it is ... that will allow us to bring into the same fold, advertising copywriters, business communication experts and Plain English campaigners?*

"Clearly a concept", he declares "that has found its time." There are obvious attractions in the way the term has been variously applied in recent literature. The very nature of generic framework is multidisciplinary. Genre theory extends discourse analysis from linguistic description to explanation, often attempting to answer the question, *why do members of specific discourse communities use the language the way they do?* The answer takes into account not only socio-cultural but cognitive factors too, thereby attempting to clarify not only the communicative goals of the discourse community in question but also the cognitive strategies employed by its members to achieve these goals. This tactical aspect of genre construction, its interpretation and use is probably one of the most significant factors that accounts for its current popularity in the field of discourse and communication studies. One of the disadvantages of such popularity is that the more popular a concept becomes, the more variations in interpretations, orientations

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and frameworks one is likely to confront. Sometimes, these variations become so significant and deep rooted that one may find it difficult to recognize it as a single construct, or a uniform entity. Academics interested in genre theory may find themselves in somewhat similar situation.

In this paper, I would like to clarify the notion of genre analysis to see what is common in its various manifestations, on the one hand, and to identify some of the methodological issues, which have been raised in the context of actually doing genre analysis, on the other. However, before we embark on such an arduous venture, I would like to discuss, though very briefly, what I mean by the term 'genre', and in order to do that I cannot find a better starting point than the following quote by Martin, 1985.

> *"Genres are how things get done, when language is used to accomplish them."*
>
> *Martin (1985)*

Non-literary genre analysis is the study of situated linguistic behaviour in institutionalized academic or professional settings. Genre theory tends to give a grounded or what sociologists call a 'thick' description of language use rather than a surface-level description of statistically significant features of language, which has been very typical of much of register analysis.

Although in many of the recent studies of professional and academic genres, there has been a somewhat strong emphasis on conventionalized or institutionalized aspects of language use, the ultimate aim of genre theory is to offer a more dynamic explanation of the way expert users of language manipulate generic conventions to achieve a variety of complex goals. In this sense, it combines the advantages of an essentially sociolinguistic perspective, including the use of ethnographic information, as well as of a cognitive perspective, especially from the point of tactical use of language.

Much of it is applied, in the sense that it has a genuine interest in the use of language to achieve communicative goals, rather than a detailed extension, validation or otherwise of one linguistic framework or the other. In this sense, it is not an extension of linguistic formalism, but is motivated by applied linguistic concerns. It may be language teaching in schools (as in Australia), English for Specific Purposes (as in the U. K. and many other parts of the world, especially Asia, and Latin

America), Teaching of writing (as in the United States), reform in language use (as in the legal contexts in many parts of the world, especially in Australia, the U. K. and the U. S.) However, these applied concerns are not exactly similar because of the nature and perhaps, the level of application intended. The differences have become somewhat sharpened because of the theoretical background of the people involved in such research, the nature and extent of investment in the enterprise and also because of the geographical distance between the groups of investigators. However, in spite of a variety of perspectives, emerging from a range of motivations, and contexts of applications, (which may range from academic, professional and more generally social contexts), genre theory does seem to have a common paradigm, a coherent methodology and an overlapping concern with applications. Let me give some substance to this claim by considering at least three of these orientations.

2. Genre as typified rhetorical action

The first major orientation that has emerged rather independently in the USA, seems to be the direct outcome of a large number of writing teachers' effort to teach rhetoric and writing courses. Based on the studies of rhetorical traditions, they identify genres as typical responses to recurring rhetorical situations. Without using the term genre, Bitzer (1968:13) seems to give a good account of it when he describes recurrent rhetorical situations.

> *From day to day, year to year, comparable situations occur, prompting comparable responses; hence rhetorical forms are born, and a special vocabulary, grammar, and style are established... The situations recur and, because we experience situations and the rhetorical responses to them, a form of discourse is not only established but comes to have power of its own—-the tradition itself tends to function as constraint upon any new response in the form.*

Miller (1984) took the notion of recurrence of rhetorical situations, linking it to the typicality of responses and constructs her view of genre which is seen as a form of social action.

> *Genre refers to a conventional category of discourse based in large-scale typification of rhetorical action; as action, it acquires meaning from situation and from social context in which situation arose.*

> *[Miller, 1884:163]*

Within the American rhetorical tradition, we can identify at least two more, slightly variant interpretations of genre theory. One of them, mainly influenced by Miller's framework, is associated with the works of Bazerman (1988, 1993, 1994).

Bazerman's work (1988, 1993, 1994) on genre analysis developed from his concern to investigate the evolution of the scientific journal article. In some of the very interesting and insightful studies of the scientific research article he traces the history of the genre, the way it developed in the last hundred years or so from its initial relatively short versions in the 1890s to its fully developed rather longish forms in the 1980s, containing elaborate descriptions of previous research and theory, increasing use of abstractions, often realized in terms of specialist lexis, non-linear use of language (equations, charts, graphs, diagrams etc.) and of course, a discrete schematic structure (introduction, methods, observation, discussion and conclusion).

The other development, which may, in a limited sense, be understood as the extension of Bazerman's work has been a very recent one. Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995) have made significant attempts, on the one hand, "to broaden the scope of textual analyses", and on the other, "to study the discursive practices of actual users of the genre", thereby making an attempt to link generic change to situated cognition. Taking genre conventions as 'windows' into the functioning of discourse communities, they wanted to see "what the evolution of the genre might indicate about the scientific community itself". They consider genres as

> *inherently dynamic rhetorical structures that can be manipulated according to the conditions of use, and that genre knowledge is therefore best conceptualized as a form of situated cognition embedded in disciplinary cultures.*

They outline five principles as they construct a sociocognitive orientation to genre theory, which include the following.

- Dynamism. Genres are dynamic rhetorical forms that are developed from actors' responses to recurring situations and that serve to stabilize experience and give it coherence and meaning. Genres change over time in response to their users' sociocognitive needs.

- Situatedness. Our knowledge of genres is derived from and embedded in our description in the communicative activities of daily and professional life. As such, genre knowledge is a

form of "situated cognition" that continues to develop as we participate in the activities of the ambient culture.

- Form and content. Genre knowledge embraces both form and content, including a sense of what content is appropriate to a particular purpose in a particular situation at a particular point in time.

- Duality of Structure. As we draw on genre rules to engage in professional activities, we constitute social structures (in professional, institutional, and organizational contexts) and simultaneously reproduce these structures.

- Community Ownership. Genre conventions signal a discourse community's norms, epistemology, ideology, and social ontology.

This view of genre as typified rhetorical action has been very influential in the teaching of writing and rhetoric programmes in the United States and elsewhere in recent years and marks a significant development in genre theory. As Swales (1990) points out,

> *Genre analysts among the rhetoricians ... make a substantial contribution to the evolving concept of genre suitable for ... applied purposes... They provide a valuable historical context for the study of genre movements and they finally destroy the myth ... that genre analysis necessarily has something to do with constructing a classification of genres. Miller's exceptional work reinforces the concept of genre as a means of social action, one situated in a wider sociorhetorical context and operating not only as a mechanism for teaching communicative goals but also of clarifying what these goals might be.*

> *[Swales, 1990:44]*

3.   Genre as a staged, goal oriented social process

The other major orientation to genre theory prevalent primarily in Australia derives its inspiration from systemic-functional linguistics and social semiotics. Like the American tradition, this view of genre analysis also has its eyes fixed on educational outcome, particularly in the teaching and learning of curriculum genres in schools.

The systemic-functional orientation to genre analysis, in one sense, can be seen as an extension of the Hallidayan concept of 'register', evidenced in Hasan's (1985:68) explicit attempt to relate text to context.

> *To think of text structure, not in terms of the structure of each individual text as a separate entity, but as a general statement about a genre as a whole, is to imply that there exists a close relation between text and context... The value of this approach lies ultimately in the recognition of the functional nature of language.*

She then goes on to propose her concept of genre in terms of what she calls 'generic structure potential' (GSP). However, the status of register and genre in systemic-functional linguistics is not very clear. Many a times we finds some of the scholars trained in this tradition using the two terms rather interchangeably, whereas others maintain various distinctions. Martin (1993), for example, puts register within genre and then, genre within ideology, when he attempts to clarify his projection of language and context. Kress (1993), on the other hand, categorizes genre as one of the register types in his classification. He goes on to explain,...

> *genre is one of several categories needed to provide an account of what a text is, or at the very least, questions of the social/linguistic organization of content: discourse; the modes of speech and writing and their relative intermingling; the question of fundamental cultural text types... In Martin/Rothery account these are all dealt with under the label of genre, though differentiated at the level of the Hallidayan register categories of field, tenor and mode. For Martin/Rothery, genre is the term which describes, in the end, significantly differing register types. For me, 'genre' is one term which, together with others, forms the complex which constitutes significantly different types of texts; to which I am happy to give the label 'register'.*
>
> *[Kress, 1993: 34-35]*

These may appear to be slightly different perspectives on genre, all of them, (Martin, 1985; Martin, Christie and Rothery, 1987; Kress, 1987, 1993) have, interestingly enough, made attempts to relate genres with broader concepts of culture. As Martin (1985:250) very perceptively points out that 'genres are how things get done, when language is used to accomplish them'. Genres typically embrace all linguistically realized activity-types, and at the same time, they comprise 'so much of our culture', as he puts it. Martin, Christie and Rothery (1987) also point out that genres are semiotic systems which, on the one hand, bring stability into a culture and, on the other hand, help individuals to participate in social change. They are very much in agreement with Kress (1987) when he points out,

> *If genre is entirely imbricated in other social processes, it follows that unless we view society itself as static, then neither social structures, social processes, nor therefore genres are static. Genres are dynamic, responding to the dynamics of other parts of social systems. Hence genres change historically; hence new genres emerge over time, and hence, too, what appears as 'the same' generic form at one level has recognizably distinct forms in differing social groups.*

One other thing which distinguishes registers from genres is that genres typically cuts across registers. A good example is the case of the research article introductions, which may display a large degree of overlap irrespective of the fact whether it comes from science or linguistics, economics or sociology, accountancy or history. However, as registers, these may typically be associated with registers of science, linguistics, economics, sociology, accountancy or history respectively. Martin (1993) seems to be saying this when he defines genre

> *as a staged, goal oriented social process. This means essentially that when looking at genres we are especially interested in the way they achieve their social purpose, which they usually do in more than one step. Two of the genres which were identified very early were report and recount (Martin, 1984; Martin, Christie and Rothery, 1987). Reports function as generic descriptions of classes of things — for example, dinosaurs, bears, planes, museums, television and so on. Recounts, on the other hand, focus on activities and relate an unproblematic series of events — for example, a trip to the zoo, what I did on the weekend, how my family ended up in Australia and so on.*

Although Martin, Christie and Rothery (1987) and Kress (1993) define genre as a social process, their main problem is that of adequately distinguishing it from the concept of register. Swales puts his finger very much at the right spot when he points out,

> *Aside from scholars such as Martin, Rothery and Couture, linguistics as a whole has tended to find genre indigestible. The difficulty seems to derive from the fact that register is a well-established and central concept in linguistics, while genre is a recent appendage found to be necessary as a result of important studies in text structure. Although genre is now seen as valuably fundamental to the realization of goals, and thus acts as a determinant of linguistic choices, there has been an understandable unwillingness to demote register to a secondary position, an unwillingness strengthened, on the one hand, by large-scale investment in analysis of language varieties (lexicographic among other purposes) and underpinned, on the other, by relatively*

little interest in seeing how texts are perceived, categorized and used by members of a community.

[Swales, 1990:41-42]

4. Genre as conventionalized communicative event

The third major orientation to genre theory (Swales, Bhatia, Dudley-Evans etc.) emerged in the U. K. within the broader framework of discourse analysis for applied linguistic purposes, especially the teaching of English for specific purposes. Their main concern has been to develop a grounded description of language use in institutionalized professional and academic settings. Taking communicative purpose as a basis they define 'genre'

as a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constraints choice of content and style. Communicative purpose is both a privileged criterion and one that operates to keep the scope of genre... narrowly focused on comparable rhetorical action.

[Swales, 1990:58]

Since the main concern of genre analysis, in this tradition, has been with the application of genre analysis for specialist language teaching, this has often been seen as an attempt not simply to describe linguistic behaviour as is generally associated with the best of descriptive linguistics but as providing what sociologists call a 'thick' description, often attempting to find answer the question 'why members of specialist discourse communities use the language they do?' (Bhatia, 1993). In most of the recent studies this notion of explanation is embedded in the discursive practices of the disciplinary cultures (see Swales, 1990, Bhatia, 1993, Hopkins and Dudley-Evans, 1988 etc.). In this tradition, genre analysis is seen as an attempt to take the study of language away from formal linguistics, and in turn closer to the Firthian notion of context of situation and beyond, thus turning what was at one time an essentially linguistic activity into a truly socio-cognitive investigation. In this sense, it is less of an extension of linguistic formalism but more of the study of situated cognition based in disciplinary cultures.

   Although genres, in this tradition, are essentially defined in terms of consistency of communicative purposes, these communicative pur-

poses are invariably seen as controlling lexico-grammatical as well as discoursal choices, most of them seen as displaying typical cognitive structuring, which is analyzed in terms of what has been called move-structures. As indicated in Bhatia (1993),

> *Cognitive structuring, in a way is very much like schematic structuring in schema theory, except that in the former, it is the conventionalized and standardized organization used by almost all the members of the professional community, whereas in the latter, it is often a reader's individual response to the text in question. Cognitive structuring is the property of the genre as such, and not as that of the individual reader. It depends upon the communicative purpose(s) that it serves in the genre, and that is why it varies from one genre to another.*
>
> *[Bhatia, 1993: 32]*

Genres, in this tradition as well, are seen as imposing 'constraints on allowable contributions in terms of their intent, positioning, form and functional value' (Bhatia, 1993:14). However, they are considered dynamic constructs. As Bhatia (1993:15) points out, 'these constraints are often exploited by the expert members of the discourse community to achieve private intentions within the framework of socially-recognized purpose(s)'.

5.   Common ground

Having given a very brief account of some of the major orientations to genre theory, let me now consolidate our discussion so far, in an attempt to see what is it in all these orientations that brings them together under one fold. I have given some account of the way these approaches developed at different places with their somewhat differing perspectives and very different concerns in terms of applications. I would like now to discuss some of the features of these apparently different frameworks to bring out what is common in all these endeavours. Let me identify some of these features.

5.1. Emphasis on conventions

Genres are essentially defined in terms of the use of language in conventionalized communicative settings, which give rise to specific set of communicative goals to specialized disciplinary and social groups, which in turn establish relatively stable structural forms and, to

some extent, even constrain the use of lexico-grammatical resources. As we can see, there are at least three interrelated aspects of conventions that have figured prominently in genre literature:

- Recurrence of rhetorical situations

- Regularities of structural forms

- Shared communicative purposes

The first one is perhaps the most fundamental and related to socio-cultural context, and therefore perhaps too general for applications to specific contexts. The second one is too narrow and hence too restrictive to account for variation in generic construction and interpretation. This is perhaps one reason why it becomes rather problematic when applied to more general contexts, like the primary genres. The third one is perhaps the most significant one which connects the other two. It is the communicative purposes which are embedded within specific rhetorical contexts and determine specific choices in structural and lexico-grammatical forms. This is perhaps one reason why all the three major orientations we have alluded to recognize the significant role that communicative purpose plays in the identification and interpretation of genres.

5.2. Dynamism

The second most important aspect of genre theory is that although genres are identified on the basis of recurring rhetorical contexts, communicative purposes with constraints on allowable contributions in the use of lexico-grammatical and discoursal forms, they are not static. Jamieson (1975), Miller (1984), Martin (1985), and more recently, Swales, (1990) and Bhatia (1993) also point out that genre analysis is dynamic and clarificatory rather than static and essentially classificatory. It is true that there has been a strong emphasis on conventional characteristics of genre construction and interpretation. Whichever way one may look at it (see Jamieson, 1973; Swales, 1990, 1993; Miller, 1984; Martin, 1985; Dudley-Evans, 1986; Bhatia, 1993, 1994), the most common denominator has always been the conventionalized, institutionalized and allowable (rather than the creative, innovative and exploitable) aspects of genre construction. To a large extent this is quite understandable also. As Swales (1990) maintains genres are not created

overnight. They evolve over a period of time and are not recognizable till they become somewhat standardized. In this context genre theory has placed a strong emphasis on the institutionalized aspects of genre construction and interpretation. However as Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995) point out,

> ...genres are inherently dynamic rhetorical structures that can be manipulated according to conditions of use, and that genre knowledge is therefore best conceptualized as a form of situated cognition embedded in disciplinary cultures.

Although it is true that most of the rhetorically situated texts have their generic integrity, at the same time it is also possible for the expert members of the specialist community to exploit these conventions to create new forms. However, such liberties, innovations, creativities, exploitations, whatever one may choose to call them, are invariably realized within rather than outside the generic boundaries, whichever way one may draw them, in terms of recurrence of rhetorical situations (Miller, 1984), consistency of communicative purposes (Swales 1990), existence and arrangement of obligatory structured elements (Hasan and Halliday, 1985) or a combination of these (Bhatia, 1993). The moment it becomes free-for-all kind of activity, communication itself will become more of a problem, rather than solution. The nature of genre manipulation is invariably realized within the broad limits of specific genres and is often very subtle. The reason is that any flagrant flouting of generic conventions leads to opting out of the genre alto-gether and is noticed by the specialist community as odd. Fairclough (1989, 59) aptly illustrates the importance of conventions by considering medical encounter between a male gynaecologist and his female patient. Often, the gynaecologist needs to reassure his patient in his soft and soothing voice at the time of internal examination, `now relax as much as you can, I'll be as gentle as I can'. Quite appropriately Fairclough asks, `what is there in this brief encounter that helps the patient to interpret it as a medical rather than sexual encounter'. In answer he points out,

> ...the constraints on the settings of gynaecological examinations are of major significance in guaranteeing that the encounter is indeed a medical one... Such examinations can legitimately be undertaken only in 'medical space' — a hospital or a consulting room — which implies the presence of a whole range of medical paraphernalia which help to legitimize the encounter.

Any attempt to overlook, ignore or undermine the power of conventions at this stage can result in disastrous consequences. Obviously, generic conventions go a long way to maintain desirable communicative climate and social order in civilized professional communities.

5.3. Propensity for innovation

In the present-day competitive professional and academic climate, genres have become vehicles for a more complex and dynamic interchange of communication. This dynamic complexity of professional communication is the result of several factors, including the ever-increasing use of multi-media, explosion of information technology, multi-disciplinary contexts in the world of work, increasingly competitive professional (academic as well as business) environment, and the overwhelmingly compulsive nature of promotional and advertising activities, and above all the urge to be creative and innovative in professional communication. This gives rise to two different and yet related rhetorical contexts.

As we know, genres are associated with typical socio-rhetorical situations and in turn, shape future responses to similar situations; however as Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995: 6) point out,

> *Genres ... are always sites of contention between stability and change. They are inherently dynamic, constantly (if gradually) changing over time in response to sociocognitive needs of individual users.*

It may be that a person is required to respond to a somewhat changing socio-cognitive need, requiring him to negotiate his response in the light of recognizable or established conventions, since genres do change over time in response to changing sociocognitive needs. In a case like this one may be tempted to generate new generic forms. However, such new forms are less likely to succeed if the writer does not carry what Kress (1987) calls appropriate "authority" to innovate

> *.... unless there is change in the social structures—-and in the kinds of social occasions in which texts are produced—-the new generic forms are unlikely to succeed. That is why childish innovations fail: not because they do not constitute perfectly plausible solutions to textual/cognitive problems, but because they are supported neither by a stable social occasion, nor by "authority".*

> *[Kress, 1987:41-42]*

He goes on to add,

> *Genres are cultural constructs, they are as culture determines. Challenging genres is therefore challenging culture.... (Dixon) and I are in a position to risk and perhaps to achieve that. However, it seems to me entirely inappropriate to ask those least able to carry that burden...*
>
> [Kress, 1987:44]

Such is the power and politics of genre.

There may also be another kind of innovation, which may not require one to invent new forms but may be required to communicate 'private intentions' within the rhetorical context of a 'socially recognized communicative goal'. Although genres are based on conventionalized, institutionalized, and to a large extent, standardized linguistic behaviour in various professional and academic settings, they have propensity for mixing and embedding. This gives considerable tactical freedom to expert members of the discourse community in question to manipulate generic resources and conventions to express private intentions within the framework of socially recognized communicative purposes. In this case, it is possible for an established member of the discourse community to resort to genre-mixing and embedding to achieve private intentions within the context of socially recognized communicative purposes (Bhatia,1995).

5.4. Generic versatility

Using communicative purpose associated with a specific rhetorical situation as a privileged criterion, genre theory combines the advantages of a more general view of language use on the one hand, and its very specific realization, on the other (Swales, 1990:58; Bhatia, 1993). In this sense, genre analysis is truly narrow in focus and broad in vision. The concept of communicative purpose itself is a versatile one. On the one hand, it can be identified at a fairly high level of generalization, whereas on the other hand it can be narrowed down to a very specific level. Also, it may either be a single communicative purpose or a more detailed set of communicative purposes. Depending upon the level of generalization and detail at which one specifies communicative purpose(s), one may be in a position to identify the status of a particular genre and its use of generic conventions. Let me give some substance to

this by taking up the case of what is commonly known as promotional discourse.

At the highest level of generalization "promotional discourse" forms a constellation of several closely-related genres with an overlapping communicative purpose of promoting a product or service to a potential customer or client. Some of the common examples of promotional genres may include advertisements, promotional letters, job applications (in the sense that their purpose is also to sell the services of the applicant to a potential employer, see Bhatia, 1993), book blurbs, company brochures, travel brochures and a number of others. All these and a number of other instances of this kind have a large degree of overlap in the communicative purposes they tend to serve and that is the main reason why they are seen as forming a sort of closely-related 'discourse colony' serving more or less a common promotional purpose, in spite of the fact that some of them may also display subtle differences in their realizations. It is further possible for us to view any one of these genres, advertisements for example, at a lower level of generalization and make distinctions between more specific realizations of this genre. Obvious examples will include print advertisements, TV commercials, radio advertisements and others. The differences between these are less obvious in terms of communicative purposes than the ones in terms of modes of discourse and therefore as genres, they belong to the same large category, called advertisements. Taking a step further, this time considering only print advertisements, it is further possible to view these in terms of categories like straight-line advertisements, picture-caption reminder advertisements, image-building advertisements, testimonials, pretend genres etc. (see Kathpalia 1992 for a more detailed account of the sub-categorization and their use of linguistic resources). Whatever the sub-category, all these advertisements serve the same set communicative purposes, though most of them use different strategies to promote the product or service. Straight-line advertisements most often use `product appraisal' as the main persuasive strategy, whereas Image-building advertisements rely more heavily on establishing credentials as the main source of persuasion. Another variation one may find in the use of linguistic resources is that whereas some types rely on verbal strategies (straight-line advertisements using product appraisal) while some others, for example picture-caption advertisements, rely more on visual inputs. It is further possible

for us to look at straight-line advertisements and differentiate them further either in terms of their use of linguistic features for product evaluation, or may be in terms of the kind of product they advertise, or even in terms of the audience they serve. In either case, we are sure to find subtle differences in the use of strategies for product description, evaluation and differentiation and their eventual use of linguistic resources. But the interesting thing is that all these variations become distinctive genres only at a level at which they start indicating a substantial difference in their communicative purposes.

The interesting thing about genre theory whether one uses rhetorical situation or communicative purpose as a privileged criterion, which implies that so long as the communicative purpose remains the same the texts in question are taken to closely related as genres. As we move down from level 1 to level 4, we need to define communicative purpose(s) in an increasing order of specificity and detail, if we need at all to distinguish them as genres or sub-genres. In other words, it is possible for a genre analyst to look for either similarities or differences between various members of a colony of genres. If one's interest is in looking for an overlap, he or she will be required to define communicative purposes at an appropriately lower level of specificity, whereas if one needs to distinguish a variety of specific realizations of the somewhat similarly related genres, he or she will need to specify communicative purposes at a very high level of specificity.

5.5. Genre knowledge

Genre theory exploits the knowledge not only of the communicative goals of a particular discourse community, but also of the discursive practices embedded in disciplinary cultures of those professional communities. Genre knowledge is a form of 'situated cognition', which seems inextricable from professional writers' procedural and social knowledge (Berkenkotter and Huckin 1995:13). As Fairclough (1992) points out, "... a genre implies not only a particular text type, but also particular processes of producing, distributing and consuming texts." The other aspect of this genre knowledge is the sensitivity to generic form and content. In this sense content is as important as the way it is structured. Almost all theories of genre have paid quite significant attention to structural form; Hasan (1985) gives it a criterial status in generic structure potential (GSP), Martin, Christie and Rothery (1987)

in a staged, goal oriented social process. Miller (1984) in typifications of rhetorical action, Swales in move-structure, and Bhatia (1993) in cognitive structures. The main goal of genre theory is to study how communicative purposes are achieved in specific rhetorical contexts using structural forms appropriate to specific content. Structural forms, therefore, assume an important status in the study of genre. As Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995:43) point out,

> *...forms themselves have little meaning; it is only when they are seen as serving certain functions that they become meaningful. But often one cannot detect these functions without first noticing a pattern of forms, and often such a pattern cannot by itself be detected without looking across genres..*
>
> *[Berkenkotter and Huckin, 1995:43]*

6.   Conclusion

Let me sum up the discussion so far by identifying the following three characteristics of genre analysis.

- Genre analysis represents a genuine interest in the use of language to achieve specific communicative goals rather than a detailed extension, validation or application of one linguistic framework or the other. In this sense, it is not an extension of linguistic formalism but gives a grounded description of linguistic behaviour in specific social, academic and professional contexts. It is not descriptive but explanatory, and the explanation comes from the discursive practices embedded in disciplinary cultures rather than from one linguistic framework or the other.

- Genre theory covers a lot of common ground in spite of the seeming different orientations. Recurrence of typical rhetorical situations, consistency of communicative purposes, or a generalised structure potential, all these are not mutually exclusive. Far from it, these are mutually inclusive. As I see them, rhetorical situation, although a more general concept than the other two, has embedded within it the notion of communicative purpose, which in turn controls, to a large extent, the resulting regularities of organization within a generic construct. The major difference is that of emphasis. If one emphasizes rhetorical context, one is essentially looking for generic features in terms of broad generalizations. A strong emphasis on generic structures, on the other hand, can be restrictive, whereas consistency of communicative purpose

can bring in advantages of both, broadening vision with a narrow focus.

- Genre Analysis thus narrow in focus but broad in vision, in the sense that it can be used to investigate linguistic behaviour at various levels of generality. This versatility in generic construction and interpretation allows one to account for intertextuality and interdiscursivity, on the one hand, and, generic integrity and innovation on the other. However, genre analysis does not represent a static description of language use but gives a more dynamic explanation of the way expert users of language exploit and manipulate generic conventions to achieve a variety of complex goals in response to recurring and changing rhetorical contexts.

Thus, whatever one may take as the key characteristic feature of genre, a consistency of communicative purpose, or typification of rhetorical action, or a generalized communicative structure, one invariably is concerned with unravelling mysteries of the artefact in question. In this sense, genre analysis may be seen to have several facets. It looks like a diamond with a number of carefully crafted facets; the more facets it has, the more insightful and illuminating the analytical activity and more exciting the results.

Let me finally conclude with some comments about the future directions in the field. As I see it, the facet which is becoming increasingly important and yet, least developed at this point in time, is the role of cultural contrast in genre studies. It is important for two very significant reasons: firstly, becuase of the universal popularity of the concept in different parts of the world across linguistic and cultural boundaries, and secondly, because of the variation in the use of English beyond the inner circle, i. e., the outer and expanding circles.

One of the reasons why this facet has not developed so far is that genre analysis has been primarily concerned with those aspects of language use which are highly conventionalized and, more or less, standardized.

The bilingual's linguistic repertoire displays a strange complex of linguistic and discoursal resources resulting from a range of reactions and influences. On the one hand, it exhibits a highly nativized use of lexico-grammatical and discoursal resources resulting from variations in socio-cultural norms, particularly in literary genres, which can be seen as a kind of reaction or response to native writing. On the other

hand, it shows somewhat extreme fascination for orthodoxy in linguistic behaviour, especially in non-literary writings, including some professional as well as academic genres, which can be seen as the influence of some kind of standardized or even outdated, in some cases, use of the native linguistic conventions.

The bilingual's use of linguistic resources in professional genres represents a number of diametrically opposite influences. On the one hand, we finds a certain degree of creativity and originality in the use of linguistic strategies and discoursal procedures, whereas on the other hand, we discover a rather extreme orthodoxy in the use linguistic realizations. I think, there are two different kinds of processes at work here: variability and orthodoxy. Variability in genre construction and interpretation is largely the result of cross-cultural differences in the use of language. Orthodoxy, on the other hand, is the result of highly conventionalized and more or less standardized aspects of genre construction. It may be the standardized use of lexico-grammatical resources, including formulaic, often outdated and sometimes, even, frozen expressions, indicating rather fixed discoursal values in specific genres; regularities of discourse organization, assigning more or less similar interpretative discourse structure to individual genres; or, tried and tested discourse strategies to achieve the fulfillment of certain types of communicative purpose(s). As Bhatia (1992:233) points out,

> *The bilingual's repertoire of professional genres ... represents a strange mixture of variability and orthodoxy in the use of linguistic resources. On the one hand, it displays a range of variation, particularly in non-literary genres; including the creative use of lexico-grammatical resources in literary expression and innovative use of discourse strategies for self-presentation in job applications, for instance (Bhatia,1989). At the same time, nativized genres also display somewhat extreme fascination for those conventional expressions which have been traditionally associated with certain genres. A possible explanation for this lies in the fact that although all genres are not conventionalized communicative events, some are of rather more conformative type whereas other are of more liberal type. Legislation is on one extreme, which is often associated frozen style, where one finds little room for innovation or creativity and also where variability in interpretation is often regarded as a weakness. On the other side we find literary genres, where innovation, creativity, variability in interpretation are considered definite virtues. The tendency in professional genres, therefore is towards conformity, whereas in literary genres it is definitely towards creativity. In*

nativized versions of these genres, therefore, we find bilinguals taking up both the tendencies rather too seriously, with the result that they show greater creativity and innovation in literary genres and extreme orthodoxy in many of the professional genres.

Having given an overview of genre theory, let me now identify some of the practical issues, which often remain hidden beneath sound analytical practices. Some of these are the following.

1   How do we identify genres?
*   Recurrence of rhetorical situations
*   Consistency of Communicative purposes
*   Regularities of discourse structuring
*   Combination of these

2   What is the role of Field, Mode and Tenor of discourse?

3   Will change in audience and participation make any difference?

4   How do we situate genre in institutionalized settings?
*   Study of contextual configuration
*   Study of institutional context
*   Study of text corpus
*   Study of discursive practices and disciplinary cultures
*   Study of specialist discourse communities

5   How do we go about analysing a genre?
*   The role communicative purpose(s)
*   The role of moves and sub-moves
*   The role of strategies

6   Any guiding principles?
*   Communicative Purposes are discriminative
*   Moves and sub-moves identify patterns of variation
*   Strategies are non-discriminative

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