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**WORLDS OF
WRITTEN DISCOURSE**
A GENRE-BASED VIEW

书面语篇的世界

体裁研究

VIJAY K. BHATIA 著

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Introduction

Genre theory in the past few years has contributed immensely to our understanding of the way discourse is used in academic, professional and a variety of other institutional contexts; however, its development has been quite understandably constrained by the nature and design of its applications, which have invariably focused on language teaching and learning, or communication training and consultation. In such narrowly identified and restricted contexts, one often tends to use simplified and idealized genres. The real world of discourse, in contrast to this, is complex, dynamic, versatile and unpredictable, and often appears to be confusing and chaotic. These aspects of the real world have been underplayed in the existing literature on genre theory and practice. As a consequence, we often find a wide gap between genre analyses of texts in published literature, emphasizing the integrity and purity of individual genres, and the variety of rather complex and dynamic instances of hybridized genres that one tends to find in the real world. This tension between the real world of written discourse and its representation in applied genre-based literature, especially in the context of the present-day academic, professional and institutional world, is the main theme of this book.

The book addresses this theme from the perspectives of four rather different worlds: the *world of reality*, which is complex, ever changing and problematic; the *world of private intentions*, where established writers appropriate and exploit generic resources across genres and domains to create hybrid (mixed or embedded) forms, or to bend genres; the *world of analysis*, which proposes a multidimensional and multi-perspective framework to explore different aspects of genre construction, interpretation and exploitation; and finally the *world of applications*, where we focus on the implications of this view of genre theory, interpreting applied linguistics rather broadly in areas other than ESP and language teaching. Each of these worlds forms the basis of each of four sections of the book. In addition, there is the introductory section, which consists of the first chapter, which provides an overview of the field and proposes a four-space genre-based model of analysis of written discourse.

The overview in Chapter 1 claims that the present work in genre analysis has been the result of a systematic development of discourse

analysis, which has gone through three main stages of 'textualization of lexico-grammar', 'organization of discourse' and 'contextualization of discourse'. Based on this historical development of genre theory, the chapter then proposes a four-space model of genre analysis, which looks at language as text, language as genre, language as professional practice and language as social practice.

The following two chapters then look at the real world of written discourse. The main argument is that the complexity of the real world can be viewed in terms of two rather different but related views of the world; one looks at genres within specific disciplinary domains, highlighting disciplinary differences within specific genres, whereas the other considers genre relationships across disciplinary domains, highlighting similarities across disciplines. The first one thus focuses on individual genres within disciplines, whereas the second one considers constellations of genres, which can be seen as 'genre colonies' across disciplinary boundaries. Both these views of the real world of discourse are useful for a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities of the real world of written discourse.

Section three incorporates Chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 4 explores a further dimension of written discourse which distinguishes genre construction, interpretation and use based on 'socially recognized' conventions from a careful 'exploitation' or 'manipulation' of shared genre conventions. Taking this view, on the one hand we find a range of genres in a variety of interacting relationships with one another, unfolding rich and often complex patterns of interdiscursivity, whereas on the other hand we find expert members of professional cultures exploiting this richness to create new forms of discourse, often to serve their 'private intentions' within the constructs of socially recognized communicative purposes as realized through specific genres. The chapter also takes a closer look at two of the many interesting examples of generic appropriation and conflicts, the first from the context of fundraising, where generic resources are appropriated from the discourse of marketing, creating conflicts between the corporate and the philanthropic cultures, and the second from legislative writing from two rather distinct legal systems, where two different socio-legal contexts coming in contact with each other create potential conflicts in the interpretation of similar genres. The chapter thus introduces greater complexity within the tactical space, leading to the appropriation of linguistic resources across genres, often encouraging expert writers to exploit conventions to 'bend' genres to their own advantage, sometimes giving rise to conflicts in generic interpretation. This also results in the creation of hybrid genres (both mixed and embedded).

These manipulations of established conventions raise legitimate questions about the integrity of genres and the extent of freedom that professional writers have when they choose to bend generic norms and conventions in order to create new forms. This brings into focus the underlying tension between 'generic integrity', 'generic appropriation' and 'generic creativity', which lies at the very centre of applied genre theory. Chapter 5 highlights the fact that 'generic integrity' is not something which is static or 'given', but something which is often contestable, negotiable and developing, depending upon the communicative objectives, nature of participation, and expected or anticipated outcome of the generic event. The chapter also focuses on two other related aspects of genre theory, the relationship between professional genres and expertise in particular professional fields, and how expert professionals acquire such expertise in their specialist fields and what role genre knowledge plays in this acquisition.

The emerging picture thus looks very much more complex and dynamic than what we had been familiar with in typical genre-based analyses of professional discourse. To investigate such a world, we need to have an equally complex, multidimensional and multi-perspective model of genre analysis. The next section, incorporating Chapter 6, is an attempt to provide a possible answer to the issues raised and proposes a multi-perspective and multidimensional framework for extending the theory and scope of genre analysis in an attempt to see 'the whole of the elephant', as they say, rather than approaching it from any specific point of view for a partial view. The chapter also illustrates the use of such a framework by undertaking analysis of a real text, highlighting some of the advances that the proposed framework claims.

The final section of the book takes up some of the implications of genre theory and identifies specific areas of application. In the context of applications, there is an attempt to give applied linguistics a much broader interpretation than language teaching and learning. In a similar manner, ESP is interpreted to cover language learning at work, either as part of what Lave and Wenger (1991) called *Legitimate Peripheral Participation*, or as communication training in the context of specific workplace practices.

With the rapid pace of economic development in recent years, the world has become a much smaller place; socio-political boundaries are being consistently undermined in an attempt to create global markets, which have created opportunities for interaction across linguistic boundaries. This development has created contexts where translation and new forms of information and document design have assumed a much greater importance than at any time in the history of our

civilization. Genre theory, as part of its objective to understand language use, has a valid contribution to make in this area as well. Thus teaching of language is no longer seen as an end in itself; it is increasingly seen as a means of acquiring professional expertise associated and integrated with the discursive practices of the workplace and professional cultures, whether they relate to the construction and interpretation of professional documents, designing of information through the new media, or translation across languages and cultures. In this sense, genre theory has become increasingly popular and powerful in the last few years.

In order to cope with these demands in broadly interpreted applied linguistics, the tools for analysing language are also becoming much more comprehensive and hence powerful in two ways at least. On the one hand, advancement in the field of computational linguistics has made it possible to process large corpora of language use and draw more reliable conclusions. On the other hand, interdisciplinary interests in the use of language have encouraged analysts to look for more meaningful relationships between language descriptions and institutional, professional and socio-cultural processes that shape the use of language in society, giving immense power to expert professionals and writers. If genre brings power, can we afford to ignore the politics of genre? Genre theory has significant implications for the politics of language use, and therefore the final chapter pays some attention to the exploitation of genres in the maintenance of power and the politics of language use in professional contexts.

In this book I have made an attempt to take my understanding of genre beyond my earlier concept of genre, which was restricted by my pedagogic concerns of the classroom. I have deliberately and consciously tried to turn my back on the classroom to face the world of discourse as it really is: complex, dynamic, changing, unpredictable and sometimes chaotic. I have tried to develop a model of genre analysis which adds to my earlier work and also to that of a number of other researchers. I see this as an attempt to integrate various frameworks and views of genre theory, rather than as an entirely new development.

Vijay K. Bhatia

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OVERVIEW

1 Perspectives on written discourse

I am using the term *discourse* in a general sense to refer to *language use* in institutional, professional or more general social contexts. It includes both the written as well as the spoken forms, though I will be mainly concerned with written discourse in this book. Discourse analysis refers to the study of naturally occurring written discourse focusing in particular on its analysis beyond the sentence level. As a general term, discourse analysis therefore can focus on lexicogrammatical and other textual properties, on regularities of organization of language use, on situated language use in institutional, professional or organizational contexts, or on language use in a variety of broadly configured social contexts, often highlighting social relations and identities, power asymmetry and social struggle.

1.1 History and development

In this opening chapter, I would like to give some indication of the way analysis of written discourse has developed in the last few decades. There are a number of ways one can see the historical development of this field. Viewing primarily in terms of different perspectives on the analysis of written discourse in academic, professional and other institutionalized contexts, one can identify a number of rather distinct traditions in the analysis of written discourse, some of which may be recognized as *discourse as text*, *discourse as genre*, *discourse as professional practice* and *discourse as social practice*. On the other hand, it is also possible to view the chronological development of the field in terms of three main phases, each one highlighting at least one major concern in the analysis of written discourse. The first phase can be seen as focusing on the *textualization* of lexicogrammatical resources and the second one on the regularities of *organization*, with the final one highlighting *contextualization* of discourse.

There is some value attached to both the views, and therefore I would like to highlight some aspects of the field based on the chronological development first, and then make an attempt to integrate them into a coherent argument for treating the field of written

discourse analysis as a gradual development in the direction of a number of specific perspectives on the analysis of written discourse. The chapter therefore represents historical development of the field on the one hand, and increasingly thicker descriptions of language use on the other.

The three phases that I have referred to above in the historical development of analysis of written discourse thus are:

- Textualization of lexico-grammar
- Organization of discourse
- Contextualization of discourse

In discussing these three rather distinct phases in the development of analysis of written discourse, I would like to further distinguish them in terms of various stages, some of which will show occasional overlaps; however, the purpose of the discussion is to highlight the nature of the development of the field, and more importantly the influence of relevant insights from disciplines other than descriptive linguistics, which was the main influence in the early descriptions of language use. Let me discuss some of the important aspects of what I have referred to as the chronological development of the field.

Textualization of lexico-grammar

The analyses of language use in early days, especially in the 1960s and the early 1970s, were overly influenced by frameworks in formal linguistics, and hence remained increasingly confined to surface-level features of language. These analyses were also influenced by variation studies due to the interest of many linguists in applied linguistics and language teaching (Halliday, McIntosh and Stevens 1964). Without getting into a detailed history of language variation and description, I would like to highlight some of the important stages of such a gradual development.

As part of the study of language variation as ‘register’ (Halliday, McIntosh and Stevens 1964), the early analyses of written discourse focused on statistically significant features of lexico-grammar used in a particular subset of texts associated with a particular discipline. Barber (1962) was probably one of the earliest studies identifying significant grammatical features in a corpus of scientific texts. Computational analytical procedures were not developed at that time, and hence the analytical findings were confined to only some of the significant features rather than a complete analysis of the corpus as such. Similarly, Gustaffsson (1975) focused on only one syntactic feature of legal discourse, i.e. binomials and multinomials. In a similar manner

Spencer (1975) identified yet another typical feature of legal discourse, *noun-verb combinations*. The trend continued with Bhatia and Swales (1983) who identified nominalizations in legislative discourse as their object of study. In all these preliminary attempts, one may notice two concerns: an effort to focus on the surface level of specialized texts, and an interest in the description of functional variation in discourse by focusing on statistically significant features of lexis and grammar. Both these concerns seemed to serve well the cause of applied linguistics for language teaching, especially the teaching and learning of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). There was very little attention paid to any significant comparisons of different varieties, perhaps because of the focus on ESP, which often concerned a well-defined group of learners from a specific discipline.

Some of the early analyses of lexico-grammar in specialized texts used in language teaching and learning gave an incentive to investigations of functional values that features of lexico-grammar in specialized texts represent, though often within clause boundaries without much reference to discourse organization. Functional characterization of lexico-grammar or textualization in terms of discoursal values within the rhetoric of scientific discourse was investigated in Selinker, Lackstrom and Trimble (1973). During this phase there was a clear emphasis on the characterization of functional values that features of lexico-grammar take in written discourse. Swales (1974) investigated the function of *en* – participles in chemistry texts; Oster (1981) focused on patterns of tense usage in reporting past literature in scientific discourse; and Dubois (1982) analysed the discoursal values assigned to noun phrases in biomedical journal articles. Swales (1974) documents one of the most insightful analyses of functional values of ‘bare’ attributive *en*-participles in single-noun NPs, both in the pre- and post-modifying positions, in a corpus of chemistry textbooks. He assigns two kinds of functional values to pre-posed uses of *given*, that of clarification of the ‘status’ of the sentence or that of exemplification by the author. The following text (Swales 1974: 18) contains the use of an *en*-participle for clarification:

A given bottle contains a compound which upon analysis is shown to contain 0.600 gram-atom of phosphorous and 1.500 gram-atom of oxygen.

He explains that the function of given is to prevent unnecessary and irrelevant enquiries of the following kind:

- Is this a typical experiment?
- Who did the experiment?