The power and politics of genre

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ABSTRACT: Generic knowledge plays an important role in the packing and unpacking of texts used in a wide-ranging institutionalized socio-rhetorical context. If, on the one hand, it imposes constraints on an uninitiated genre writer to conform to the conventions and rhetorical expectations of the relevant professional community, on the other hand, it allows an experienced and established writer of the genre to exploit conventions to create new forms to suit specific contexts. Unfortunately, however, this privilege to exploit generic conventions to create new forms becomes available only to those few who enjoy a certain degree of visibility in the relevant professional community; for a wide majority of others, it is more of a matter of apprenticeship in accommodating the expectations of disciplinary cultures. This paper reviews current research to investigate the way the power and the politics of genre is often exploited by the so-called established membership of disciplinary communities to keep outsiders at a safe distance.

INTRODUCTION

All discourse forms, especially those used in institutionalized contexts, are socially negotiated. At the very heart of most frameworks for the analysis of discourse, especially as genre, is the belief that there is nothing like a universal form of discourse for structuring knowledge. There can only be a 'consensus or an agreement' (Bruffee, 1986: 777) among the members of specific disciplinary communities to express their concerns in specific discursive forms. Most institutionalized forms of discourse, therefore, are socially constructed, interpreted and used. Goodrich (1987) explains this institutionalization of discoursal practices in terms of 'social authorship' as against the more familiar subjective authorship.

> The right to a discourse is organized and restricted by a wide variety of means, to particular roles, statuses, professions and so on. Similarly the institutionalisation of discourse is limited in terms of its legitimate appropriation, and the restrictive situations of its reception – church, court, school, hustings and so on.

Foucault (1981) also sees *social authorship* of discourse in terms of two interrelated aspects. The first one, according to him, is:

> Who is speaking? Whom among the totality of speaking individuals, is accorded the right to use this sort of language? Who is qualified to do so? Who derives from it his own special quality, his prestige, and from whom, in return, does he receive if not the assurance, at least the presumption that what he says is true? What is the status of the individual who – alone – have the right, sanctioned by law or tradition, juridically defined or spontaneously accepted, to proffer such a discourse?

The second, he explains in terms of institutional sites from which the authorized speaker makes his discourse and from which the discourse derives its 'legitimate source and point of application.'

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Pêcheux (1982) also stresses the importance of institutional forms in discourse when he says

> what can be and should be said – in the form of a speech, a sermon, a pamphlet, a report, a programme, etc.

Like other forms of discourse, genres are also socially constructed and are even more intimately controlled by social practices. Genres are the media through which members of professional or academic communities communicate with each other. They are, as Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995) point out,

> . . . intimately linked to a discipline's methodology, and they package information in ways that conform to a discipline's norms, values and ideology.

Myers (1995: 5) also points out,

> Disciplines are like cultures in that their members have shared, taken for granted beliefs; these beliefs can be mutually incomprehensible between cultures; these beliefs are encoded in a language; they are embodied in practices; new members are brought into culture through rituals.

The consensus is arrived at and negotiated through professional conversations and practices amongst the informed and practising members of a professional community. Interactions and conversations enable consensus, on the one hand, and have a regulatory or limiting effect on the other, as to what should or should not be admitted into a community's body of knowledge. Genres, in other words, are socially authorized through conventions, which, in turn, are embedded in the discursive practices of members of specific disciplinary cultures. These discursive practices, to a large extent, reflect not only conventions used by specific disciplinary communities, but also social conventions, including social changes, social institutions and social knowledge, all of which, in a way, could be seen as significantly contributing to what in genre theory is regarded as 'genre knowledge.' Genres, in whatever manner one may identify them, whether as *a typification of rhetorical action* (as in Miller (1984), and more recently, Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995)), as *a staged, goal oriented social process* (as in Martin (1993)), or as *shared communicative purposes* (as in Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993)), are products of an understanding or a prior knowledge of generic conventions. These generic conventions are responsible for regulating generic constructs, giving them internal ordering, which in discourse literature, for various reasons, has been given different names, some of which include discourse structuring, staging of discourse and generic structure potential (GSP).

Complexity of generic forms

Although generic forms are products of conventional knowledge embedded in disciplinary cultures, they are dynamic constructs. Typical realizations of these institutionalized forms are often characterized by their generic integrity, on the one hand, and their propensity for innovation, on the other (see Bhatia, 1993, 1995). These two aspects of genre may appear to be somewhat contradictory at first, but as we shall soon discover, these two characteristics are complementary to each other. In fact, it will not be inaccurate to suggest that one is, in a way, an essential prerequisite to the other. Generic integrity is the product of the conventional features of a specific generic construct. Although these conventions are embedded in the rhetorical context, they often constrain the use of linguistic resources (lexico-grammatical as well as discoursal), and are frequently invoked

to arrive at a reasonable interpretation of the genre or even determine the choice of the genre to suit a particular context. Within generic boundaries, experienced users of genre often manage to exercise considerable freedom to manipulate generic conventions to respond to novel situations, to mix what Bhatia (1993) calls 'private intentions' with socially recognized communicative purposes, and even to produce new forms of discourse. Therefore the tension between conformity and creativity, so often made an issue of in applied discourse studies, is not necessarily real. As Dubrow (1982: 39) points out, 'a concern for generic traditions, far from precluding originality, often helps to produce it.' Similarly, Fowler (1982: 31) points out:

> Far from inhibiting the author, genres are a positive support. They offer room, as one might say, for him to write in – a habitation of mediated definiteness, a proportioned mental space; a literary matrix by to order his experience during composition . . . The writer is invited to match experience and form in a specific yet undetermined way. Accepting the invitation does not solve his problems of expression . . . But it gives him access to formal ideas as to how a variety of constituents might suitably be combined. Genre also offers a challenge by provoking a free spirit to transcend the limitations of previous examples.

In fact, a subtle exploitation of a certain aspect of generic construct is always seen as tactically superior and effective. It is almost like the advertiser's exploitation of the cliché *the shape of things to come* in the following opening headline of an advertisement for a car.

> The shape of things to come: Mitsubishi Cordia

Or, the use of the famous statement about the British colonial empire in the Lufthansa advertisement, *The sun never sets on Lufthansa territory*, or in the following slogan for energy conservation, which says, *Don't be fuelish*, where the whole idea of waste of energy is lost unless it is associated with 'Don't be foolish.' The whole point about such associations is that they communicate best in the context of what is already familiar. In such contexts, words on their own carry no meanings; it is the experience which gives them the desired effect. Therefore, if one is not familiar with the original, the value of the novel expression is undermined. Just as the advertiser makes use of the well-known and the familiar in existing knowledge, a clever genre writer makes use of what is conventionally available to a discourse community to further his or her own subtle ends. The innovation, the creativity or the exploitation becomes effective only in the context of the already available and familiar. The main focus of this paper is on these two interrelated aspects of genre theory, i.e., the constraints on generic construction, a pre-knowledge of which gives power to insiders in specific discourse communities, and the exploitation of this power by experienced and expert members of such disciplinary cultures to achieve their 'private intentions' within 'socially recognized communicative purposes.'

Organizational preferences and generic controls

The other interesting area of generic variation, although within a restricted range, one finds in organizational preferences. In the case of academic publications, we often come across what we commonly refer to as housestyles. Although every single journal claims to have its own style sheet, most of them can be characterized more by their overlap rather than variation.

Similarly, in the case of newspaper genres, especially the news reports and the editorials, we find an unmistakable 'generic identity' (Bhatia, 1993) in almost all of the exploits of

these genres from various newspapers, although all of them have their own preferences in terms of style, stance and substance. Some may be more objective, while others more interpretative; some more socially responsible, while others more sensational. In spite of all these differences, most of them display common characteristics in terms of their use of generic resources, in terms of their structure, interpretation and communication of intentions. These somewhat different orientations to the events of the day do not make their stories very different in terms of their generic form.

Even in the case of business communities, we often find different organizations displaying their unique identities through their organizational preferences in the matters of their choice of generic forms, but the broad range of genres they tend to exploit to further their organizational objectives show remarkable similarities rather than differences. All these areas of generic use indicate that although their preferred generic forms show a subtle degree of variation for what could be seen as 'tactical advantage,' they never disregard some of the basic features of individual generic constructs, which give these genres their essential identities.

THE POWER OF GENRE

There is no better illustration of the saying 'knowledge is power' than the one in the case of generic power. Power to use, interpret, exploit and innovate novel generic forms is the function of generic knowledge which is accessible only to the members of disciplinary communities.

How do these disciplinary communities maintain what we have called generic integrity in their discursive practices? Let us look at this phenomenon by looking at the academic community.

Maintaining generic integrity: editorial intervention

In some forms of academic discourse, especially the research articles, one can see generally two kinds of mechanism in place to ensure generic integrity: the peer review process, and editorial intervention. Both these mechanisms, though operating at different levels, are actively invoked to ensure that all accounts of new knowledge conform to the standards of institutionalized behaviour that is expected by a community of established peers in a specific discipline. Although individual judgements can vary within the membership of specific disciplinary communities, a high degree of consensus is often ensured by selecting like-minded scholars from within well-defined disciplinary boundaries. For example, if we survey a few journals which regularly publish articles on discourse analysis, we will find that although all of them publish articles on various aspects of discourse, they have a very different set of reviewers to certify accounts of knowledge claims for inclusion in the respective journals. If one encounters names like Cazden, Geertz, Goffman, Gumperz, Hymes, Milroy, Saville-Troike, Scollon, Tannen, and Zimmerman on the editorial committee of a journal, one could safely guess that they will be unlikely to accept articles outside a sociolinguistic orientation on discourse. Articles on other aspects of discourse are more likely to be discouraged and even rejected. If, on the other hand, one finds names like Ackerman, Bazerman, Berkenkotter, Comprone, Doheny-Farina, Huckin, Linda Flower, Miller, or Odell, one would expect them to welcome papers with a strong rhetorical orientation. Similarly, if one finds names like Carter, Christie, Halliday, Hasan, Kress, Martin and Rothery, one will come to the

inevitable conclusion that the journal will favour a more systemic orientation to discourse.

After peer review, the second most important intervention comes from the editors,who enjoy all the power one can imagine to maintain the identity and integrity of the research article genre. Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995) document an in-depth and fascinating study of this kind of editorial control to maintain generic integrity. They point out that for the construction and dissemination of knowledge 'textual activity' is as important as the 'scientific activity.'

Generic conventions as authority: the case of citations and references

To us academics, the power of genre is nowhere better illustrated than in the publication of research articles. Swales in his research report *Aspects of Research Article Introductions* (1981) was the first one to point out the importance of the description of previous research on the rhetorical activity of knowledge dissemination as distinct from knowledge creation. In order to become acceptable to the specialist community of fellow researchers, one must relate his or her knowledge claims to the accumulated knowledge of the discipline, without which his or her claims in the field are unlikely to find recognition through publication. In this context it is hardly surprising that literature review occupies an important place in the researcher's repertoire of skills in most academic disciplines. Referring to the importance of citation in scientific research activity, Amserdamska and Leydesdorff (1989: 451) point out,

> In a scientific article 'the new encounters the old' for the first time. This encounter has a double significance since articles not only justify the new by showing that the result is warranted by experiment or observation or previous theory, but also place and integrate innovations into the context of 'old' and accepted knowledge . . . References which appear in the text are the most explicit manner in which the arguments presented in the article are portrayed as linked to other texts, and thus also to particular body of knowledge.

Power to innovate (mixing and embedding)

Although this pressure for the 'democratisation' (Fairclough, 1992) of discourse is becoming increasingly intense in some countries, especially in the USA, it is unlikely to make a significant dent in the so-called integrity of professional genres, at least not in the foreseeable future. However, one can see an increasing 'fragmentation of discursive norms and conventions' (Fairclough, 1992: 221), often leading to genre-mixing and embedding in institutionalized orders of discourse (see Bhatia, 1994, for a detailed discussion of this), on the one hand, and creation of new genres, on the other. To a large extent, these changes in discursive practices are making professional genres increasingly dynamic and complex.

The dynamic complexity of academic and professional communication is further increased by the role of multimedia, the explosion of information technology, the multi-disciplinary contexts of the world of work, the increasingly competitive professional environment, and above all, the overwhelmingly compulsive nature of promotional and advertising activities, so much so that our present-day world of work is being increasingly identified as a 'consumer culture' (Featherstone, 1991). The inevitable result of this is that many of the institutionalized genres, whether they are social, professional or academic, are seen as incorporating elements of promotion. Fairclough (1992: 207) rightly associates

some of these changes with what he calls 'commodification' of institutional orders of discourse. Referring to such changes in discourse practices, he (1993: 141) points out,

> . . . there is an extensive restructuring of boundaries between orders of discourse and between discursive practices, for example, the genre of consumer advertising has been colonising professional and public service orders of discourse on a massive scale, generating many new hybrid partly promotional genres . . .

As an instance of such a hybrid genre, Fairclough (1993) discusses the case of contemporary university prospectuses, where he highlights an increasing tendency towards marketization of the discursive practices of British universities. Bhatia (1995), in his discussion of genre-mixing in professional discourse, gives examples from several settings, where genre-mixing and embedding is becoming increasingly common. He also mentions several instances where one may find an increasing use of promotional strategies in genres which are traditionally considered non-promotional in intent, especially academic introductions, including book introductions, forewords, prefaces of various kinds, which are becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish from publishers' blurbs.

Shared knowledge – privileged access/insider information

If generic conventions, on the one hand, give suitable expression to the communicative intentions of genre writers (who are members of a particular discourse community), on the other hand, they also match their intentions against their intended reader's expectations. This is possible only when all the participants share, not only the code, but also the knowledge of the genre, which includes the knowledge of its construction, interpretation and use. A necessary implication of this shared genre knowledge is that it is not routinely available to the outsiders, which creates a kind of social distance between the legitimate members of a discourse community and those who are considered outsiders. Although this creates conditions of homogeneity between the insiders, at the same time it also increases social distance between them and the outsiders, sometimes resulting in disastrous consequences for the one who does not have access to such shared knowledge. This shared knowledge could be in the form of linguistic resources used to construct a generic form, or it could be in the awareness of the rules of language use, some of which are socially learnt, as the ones associated with classroom discourse and academic genres,while other scan be legally enforced, such as the ones associated with courtroom procedures. Allen and Guy (1989), based on a personal communication from Worthington (1984: personal communication), report an excellent example of the lack of shared knowledge from the account of the courtroom interaction.

> An off-duty policeman in a store had shot and killed an intruder. Investigation had shown a set of burglar tools at the back of the store. The prosecutor was trying to show that there was no ground for presuming criminal intent, and that this was cold-blooded murder. The victim's wife was testifying for the prosecution. Here she is being cross-examined by the defense.
>
> Defense Lawyer: Could you tell the court and the jury what your husband's occupation was?
> Wife: He was a burglar.
>
> This supported the defense's contention of criminal intent, and secured acquittal for the policeman.

If only the wife had been slightly more familiar with the conventions of the courtroom examination, the task of the defence lawyer would not have become that easy.

Another example of the use of insider information to get access to information can be illustrated by the following headline from an advertisement for 'The Schroder Singapore Trust,' which reads,

The Schroder Singapore Trust Has Grown Over 60% In 3 Years

The information being given here can be extremely misleading, except to those who are well aware of the discursive practices of the professional community of financial managers. Anybody trying to make sense of this statement should know that this 60 percent growth in three years on its face value could be misleading, to say the least. Although it carries the usual statutory disclaimer in the form of a note in small print saying, 'Past performance is not necessarily a guide to future performance, the price of units may fall as well as rise and cannot be guaranteed,' a lay person might still be led to think that his investment will probably get him close to a 60 percent return. The fact, on the other hand, could be that the unit value might have declined by 100 percent in the last one year or so, and may still be showing the downward trend at the time of the advertisement. There could be several other possible scenarios which will be accessible only to those with the inside knowledge of the way these genres function rather than to outsiders.

Maintaining solidarity within a professional community

One of the most noticeable characteristics of any professional or academic discourse community is the availability and typical use of a range of appropriate genres, which their members think serve the goals of their community. The recurrent use of such discoursal forms create solidarity within its membership giving them their most powerful weapon to keep the outsiders at a safe distance. Hudson (1979: 1) rightly claims,

> If one wished to kill a profession, to remove its cohesion and its strength, the most effective way would be to forbid the use of its characteristic language.

In this context, it is hardly surprising that most of the attempts by the powerful reformist lobbies in many Western democracies to introduce plain English in legislative contexts are seen as imposition from outside and have been firmly rejected by the professional legal community.

The main purpose of legislation, as Bhatia (1993) points out, is to govern the behaviour of individuals and institutions in society through the use of rules and regulations. In order to keep control firmly in the hands of the legislature rather than the judiciary in a parliamentary democracy, statutory acts are written not only clearly, precisely and unambiguously but all-inclusively too. This rigour and adequate specification of scope in legislation helps the legislature to control a totally subjective and idiosyncratic interpretation of the statute book.

All attempts to reform legislative language, including those by the plain English campaign (see Thomas, 1985; Eagleson, 1988; Kelly, 1988), have to a large extent met with very limited success, for the simple reason that they are seen as a transgression of the generic integrity of the whole tradition in the legislative process. Although the plain English movement has been quite effective in influencing the redrafting of general commercial and administrative documents, including insurance policies, residential leases, tax return forms, social benefit claim forms and other papers for better *accessibility* and *usability* by a larger section of society, when it comes to legislative provisions, it has not been able to soften the attitude of the parliamentary draftsmen significantly in many of

the Commonwealth countries. The other argument for the preservation of these generic characteristics of legislative discourse is that the real legislative power in all parliamentary democracies must rest with the legislature and not with the judiciary. This is one of the most important reasons why clarity, precision, unambiguity and all-inclusiveness are so highly prized in British legislative discourse, which gives a relatively high degree of transparency to legislative intentions.

Power and control in legislative context

Writing legislative discourse in terms of simple principles without adequate specification of the required scope, on the other hand, means giving wider powers to the judges and the courts to interpret the intentions of the legislature, which is not considered highly desirable in parliamentary democracies.

We find an excellent illustration of this point in the Basic Law drafted by the People's Republic of China. It is meant to be a mini-constitution for post-1997 Hong Kong based on the Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1978. It is written in the form of very simple principles and guidelines, a generic form, which can be seen as almost exactly the opposite of what we find in a typical legislative discourse from any of the countries of the Commonwealth. It is written in the form of basic principles on which there can hardly be any disagreement, lacking very significantly in details of all kinds. One of the important issues raised there is that of status of the laws previously in force in Hong Kong. Article 8 of the Basic Law states,

> The laws previously in force in Hong Kong, that is, the common law, rules of equity, ordinances, subordinate legislation and customary law shall be maintained, except for any that contravene this law, and subject to any amendment by the legislature of the Hong Kong special Administrative Region.

As one may see, like the other Articles of the Basic Law, this one too is expressed in terms of somewhat universal principles which are applicable to everything one could think of in the context of pre-existing legislative machinery. One may be tempted to point out that there should be no serious problem in expressing legislation in terms of general principles. There are several legal systems which adopt such a strategy. The French legislative system is a good example of this. However, problems have occurred in this context, primarily because the transition of power has still some way to go. A number of issues are still unresolved and to make it worse, all this is happening in the context where two very different systems are in operation, the most elaborate and exhaustive legislative style used in the UK and their extremely diluted plain English versions captured in the Basic Law. Every time a new ordinance is considered or promulgated in Hong Kong, it becomes a matter of fresh negotiation between the two governments.

Obviously, this generic form of writing gives maximum power to the one who has the authority to interpret it. Since the Basic Law is meant to take effect only after July 1, 1997, after the territory is handed over to China, the eventual control over its interpretation will be concentrated in the hands of the future SAR government of the PRC. However, in the intervening period leading up to the hand-over, the interpretations of many of its sections have been disputed by both sides, for the simple reason that the genre in which it is written allows maximum power to interpret it to those who have the power to do it, which for the time being is shared by the two parties.

The power and politics of genre are the two sides of the same coin. In one context, it can

be seen as a legitimate force often used to maintain solidarity within a disciplinary community, whereas on the other hand, it is used to keep outsiders at a respectable distance. On the one hand, it empowers some people, the insiders, while at the same time, it tends to silence others, especially the outsiders. That is what I meant by the power and politics of genre. We have seen the power of genre, let's turn to its politics now.

THE POLITICS OF GENRE

Exploitation, innovation and manipulation of generic conventions

I have tried to present genre as a dynamic and clarificatory rather than a static or classificatory construct. I have also tried to maintain that it has a propensity for innovation, exploitation and manipulation. I would now like to take this argument further to discuss the nature of this exploitation or manipulation and constraints on such exploitation.

Genres are dynamic constructs, even though they are essentially seen as embedded in conventions associated with typical instances of language use in social, academic or professional settings. An understanding or a prior knowledge of conventions is considered essential for its identification, construction, interpretation, use and ultimate exploitation by members of specific professional communities to achieve socially recognized goals with some degree of pragmatic success.

The nature of genre manipulation is invariably realized within the broad limits of specific genres and is often very subtle. This can only be handled within the concept of genre because 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 (Halliday and Hasan, 1985) or a combination of these (Bhatia, 1993). The moment it becomes a free-for-all kind of activity, communication itself will become more of a problem. The reason is that the flouting of generic conventions leads to the opting out of the genre altogether and is noticed by the members of the concerned disciplinary community as being odd. Any attempt, therefore, to overlook, ignore or undermine the power of conventions at this stage can result in disastrous consequences.

Although a good understanding of genre knowledge is a prerequisite to any manipulation of generic resources, it is by no means sufficient to get such innovations and exploitations accepted in a disciplinary community. Kress (1987: 42) mentions two significant ways in which generic innovations are accepted, either they are backed by a stable social occasion or by authority.

> Unless . . . there is a 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 particular textual/cognitive problems, but because they are supported neither by a stable social occasion, nor by 'authority.' This latter is of course the case where a writer of 'authority' creates a new generic form, which, seemingly because of the writer's authority alone, succeeds in establishing a new generic convention.

Gate-keeping function of discourse communities

Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995: 102) in their study of gate-keeping at an academic convention, i.e., the study of abstracts submitted for the Conference on College

Composition and Communication (CCCC), discuss an interesting instance of the power of generic control in well-defined contexts. On the basis of their analysis of the process of selection of papers for the CCCC convention, they claim that,

1. The high-rated abstracts all addressed topics of current *interest to active, experienced members of the rhetoric and composition community*; the low-rated abstracts often did not.
2. Almost all of the high-rated abstracts *clearly defined a problem*; the low-rated abstracts often did not.
3. The high-rated abstracts all *discussed this problem in a way that would be seen by experienced insiders as novel and therefore interesting*, whereas virtually none of the low-rated abstracts did.
4. The high-rated abstracts usually *projected more of an insider ethos* through the use of terminology, special topoi, and/or explicit or implicit references to the scholarly literature of the field than did the low-rated abstracts. [Emphasis added.]

They also point out that often 'the genre was shaped significantly by the interests of the program chair.' This is generally done through the theme statement issued when papers are invited for the convention. Depending upon the interests of the program chair or of the discourse community he/she represents, the emphasis can shift from one year to the other. Based on their study of CCCC abstracts for four years between 1988–92, they find two main levels of gate-keeping (1995: 115):

(a) the external reviewers and (b) the program chair. We have observed many cases where the reviewers rated an abstract Excellent and yet it was not included in the program. Presumably, the chair disagreed with the reviewers' judgements. . . . In short, each convention bears the stamp of its principal gatekeeper.

They further point out that (1995: 115),

In one particularly unfortunate case, a very interesting abstract was submitted to the Technical Communication area one year, where it received an Excellent rating from a reviewer and the program chair but was not included in the program (presumably because of a bad 'fit'). It was revised slightly and resubmitted the following year to the Discourse Analysis area. Again it received an Excellent rating, but again it was not included in the program. The author of this abstract probably never knew that she had written an outstanding abstract. All she would have been told was that her paper had been rejected for the program.

Another interesting case of such a gate-keeping encounter, though of a slightly different nature, between two different discourse groups was recently referred to by William Bright (1996). Giving his view of 30 years of American linguistics, he referred to the following extract from a letter written by Chomsky,

. . . the level of rumour-mongering and of personal hostility . . . outright falsification so scandalous that they raise serious questions about the integrity of the field . . . I do not want to be associated with a journal . . . which publishes flat lies . . . couched in rhetoric of a sort that might be appropriate to some criminal, but that one is surprised to find in a scholarly journal.

No wonder Chomsky never published in the journal, not because he was kept out, but he decided to keep himself out. Gate-keeping can obviously work both ways.

Hegemony and world Englishes – generic variation and control

Another important aspect of generic control raises the issue of hegemonic attitude to maintain generic standards, which in much of contemporary discourse and genre studies are dominated and even determined by essentially Western conventions. Although it is true

that English is the most dominant and widely used global language for academic as well as professional purposes, it is no longer the sole property of any one community of people, be they English, American, Australian or any other. Like cricket, English has also become more universal not only in usage but also in its character. True to the reality of present-day variation in English, one needs to think in terms of world Englishes, rather than English as a single monolithic variety of English (for a detailed discussion and references see Kachru, 1986, 1994 and 1996). This variation in the use of English across the globe is getting increasing recognition in the sociolinguistic literature in the last decade or so; however, in some of the genres, especially used in the academia, the power to control and maintain generic standards can be, and often is, interpreted in terms of the dominant community, which undoubtedly happens to be a Western community. Anything which appears to be different from the norms set by the dominant community is viewed as deficient and in need of correction.

In some areas, genre writers have become increasingly sensitive to local knowledge and have started constructing, interpreting and using genres in forms which display such sensitivities, especially in the case of advertising and some other business genres, where it has become an established practice now to develop local teams to act alongside the expatriates in most of the multinational advertising companies. The reason for such sensitivities is also not difficult to understand. In the case of academic genres, especially in research publications, the politics is still controlled by those who have the power. Much of the academic discourse still fails to acknowledge the sources of variations, especially those of marginality and exclusion, giving the impression that there is, or should be, no variation in the way genres are constructed, interpreted and used.

IMPLICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

What are the implications of all this for language teaching? Applied genre analysis, unlike many other analytical frameworks, is neither static nor prescriptive. Potentially, it is dynamic and explanatory. It is for the language teacher to use it the way one would like to use it, for innovative exploitation of generic resources or for a limited exposure to standardized generic contexts. Although it is essential for the learner to be familiar with specific generic conventions associated with a particular professional setting, it is neither necessary nor desirable to restrict the experience of linguistic behaviour to just the conventionalized and standardized aspects of genre construction and use.

How can one bring in creativity in genre-based language teaching and learning? Since genre analysis gives a grounded description of linguistic behaviour in professional settings, it is possible to bring in a fair amount of creativity in language teaching by adjusting communicative purposes, the nature of participation in a particular communicative setting, the social and professional relationship between the participants taking part in a particular genre-construction exercise, and above all, by bringing in variability in the use of generic strategies to achieve the same communicative purposes.

There are two schools of thought, I should say. Those who believe in the explicit teaching of genres, especially the regularities of textual form and typifications, and others who see this as too constraining and advocate free expression. The truth, however, rests somewhere in the middle. All genres, primary as well as secondary, involve regularities and, hence, these regularities must be learnt by anyone who has even the slightest ambition

of being part of any specialist disciplinary community. As Bakhtin (1986: 80) points out 'genres must be fully mastered to be used creatively.'

However, in order to make this happen, the first prerequisite is to have an awareness of the conventional knowledge that is situated within a specific disciplinary genre or a 'system of genres.'

Bazerman (1993: viii) attempts to resolve this tension between institutionalized expression and individual expression when he points out,

> . . . the individual learns to express the self against the compulsive society . . . We are not ourselves because we set ourselves apart from each other. We become ourselves as we realize ourselves in relation to each other. The social is everything we do with each other and what we become as we do it. We individuate by identifying ourselves on a social landscape, a landscape come to know as we interact with it. We discover and create ourselves and others by what we do with each other.

There are at least three things which stand out clearly from the foregoing discussion. First, language learners need to become aware of the conversations of the disciplinary community to which they aspire to be members of, which could be done through 'centripetal participation in the learning curriculum of the ambient community' (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 100). Second, acquisition of genre knowledge, which leads to an understanding of generic integrity, is necessary but not sufficient for any subsequent exploitation or manipulation of generic conventions. And, finally, genre knowledge should be best viewed as a resource to exploit generic conventions to respond to recurrent and not so recurrent rhetorical situations, rather than a blueprint for replication.

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