

2 The specification of a text: register, genre and language teaching

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Process and product

In a functional theory of language, analysts are not just interested in what language is, but why language is; not just what language means, but how language means (Birch 1989:1).

In this chapter I propose that an understanding of language, and the teaching of that language, must take into account not only the nature of the finished product, the text, but also the processes by which language or text is produced and interpreted. One of the major ways of exploring this is by developing more delicate theoretical and practical accounts of *register* and *genre*. To that end I have three preliminary, but principal, concerns. One, the **FUNCTIONAL role** of text in society. Two, the **INTERTEXTUAL role** of the relationship between texts, both in terms of their social functions and in terms of their linguistic similarities and differences. Three, the **IDENTIFYING role** of specifying texts, spoken and written, in terms of both their social functions and their linguistic structures.

To specify, for example, the identifying features of the registers of written English from those of spoken English, it is essential to have a commonly accepted basis for comparison. In the past, discussions of written literary texts, for example, were traditionally based on the specification

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Helen Leckie-Tarry was an exemplary student and a scholar of immense capabilities and insight, and she leaves in her work, as a legacy to the world of learning that she loved so much, an outstanding contribution of original thinking.

of genre. Discussions of non-literary and spoken texts are a rather more recent phenomenon, and such texts have received little generic attention, but, particularly within systemic functional linguistics, have been included within register studies.

More recently, both concepts have been elaborated so that the terms 'register' and 'genre' appear at times to be of equal importance in the analysis of written and spoken, literary and non-literary texts. 'Genre', particularly with the work of some Australian systemic linguists, has assumed an important place within functional linguistics, a place which might, at one time, seem to have been firmly, and exclusively, reserved by 'register'.

This paper is a discussion of some of the theoretical changes and developments that have been taking place in register and genre studies in the last few years, particularly within the context of functional linguistics and its application in the language teaching classroom. In the ESL classroom, the teaching of the registers of written English is broadly contained within the more specific areas of BAP (English for Academic Purposes) or ESP (English for Specific Purposes), which place a particular emphasis on the language of formal expository prose.

It is not a coincidence that the genres of casual conversation on the one hand and expository prose on the other have been associated with spoken and written language respectively (Tannen, 1985: 129).

In order to teach students how to operate in an academic context, they must know the language of English academic texts, and this in turn will involve developing in them an understanding of how academic texts function in society; how academic texts are produced; how academic discourse relates to the English language as a whole, and how registerially specific are the linguistic structures of academic discourse.

We may assume that with all natural languages the speakers are able to adapt themselves verbally to different situations. This is a fundamental assumption and may be said to be part of the 'theory of register'. But how far these kinds of verbally appropriate behaviour are recognized consciously by the native speaker, or how far he (*sic*) merely responds intuitively, and how far the contrasts are readily perceived by linguists may vary from language to language and pose problems of linguistic description (Essex, 1978: 54-).

Students of language need to develop a conscious recognition of the mechanisms of adaptation, and a conscious recognition of the differences between these mechanisms from one language to another. For language teachers to develop this recognition in their students, the teachers themselves need a model that shows systematically how text is related to context' (Martin *et al.*, 1987: 63), and this model must be of such a kind that it may be effectively applied to classroom use.

Mch' has been done towards developing models which relate text to context; One of the most influential is that of Halliday (1978: 142) who believes that the question is 'one of characterizing the context of situation in appropriate terms in terms which will reveal the systematic relationship between language and the environment: This involves some, form of theoretical construction that relates the situation simultaneously to the text, to the linguistic system, and to the social system.' This emphasis on the relations between the linguistic and the social is an important one, because without 'immediate and direct relations to the social context, the forms and functions of language are not fully explicable' (Kress and Hodge 1979: 13). And, it is here that an important 'latter-day' Hallidayan development has taken place. In the early Hallidayan literature, descriptions of 'the social system' concentrate, for the most part, on an analysis of the context of situation; more recently, descriptions of 'social context' focus more strongly on the broader 'culture' which is seen as a homogeneous entity uniting a harmonious society' (Kress and Hodge 1979: 13). A language then is a 'system of categories and rules based on fundamental principles and assumptions about the world' (1979: 5). So close is the bond between language and its social context that 'these principles and assumptions are not related to or determined by thought: they are thought Such assumptions are embodied in language, learnt through language, and reinforced in language use' (1979: 5). This 'systematically organized presentation of reality' is now generally understood to be 'ideology', which is built into language at the deepest, hence unconscious, level (1979: 15).

It is this complex system of linguistic, social, cultural and ideological relationships between text and the various levels of context that must be accounted for by any theory of language, and its consequent application to language teaching. The exploration of these relationships was, for some thirty years or so, considered the province of the theory and study of register; more recently it has become the province also of theory of genre. Both have much to offer in revealing the nature of the relationships, and as a consequence I examine both in some detail.

Register

A theory of register aims to 'uncover the general principles which govern [the variation in situation types], so that we can begin to understand what situational factors determine what linguistic features' (Halliday 1978: 32). In other words, theories of register, according to this position, aim to propose relationships between language *function*, (determined by situational or societal factors), and language *form*.

The term 'register' first came into general currency in the sixties. According to Halliday, it was first used by Reid in 1956 and later developed by Ure (Ure 1968, Ellis and Ure 1969). He himself, in 1964, described register as 'a variety according to use, in the sense that each speaker has a range of varieties and chooses between them at different

times', 'to distinguish the term from dialect, which is a variety according to user, in the sense that each speaker uses one variety and uses it all the time' (Halliday, Mackintosh and Strevens 1964: 77).

Hence this concept of register has been seen by Halliday as bound to a particular situation.

When we observe language activity in the various contexts in which it takes place, we find differences in the type of language selected as appropriate to different types of situation (Halliday *et al.* 1964: 87).

A register is constituted by 'the linguistic features which are typically associated with a configuration of situational features – with particular values of the field, mode and tenor' (1976: 22). In general, these definitions take as their point of departure the linguistic structure of a text and relate it to elements of context, more specifically the context of situation of the text.

Halliday's later definition tends to place the more primary emphasis on semantic patterns and context.

[Register] is the set of meanings, the configuration of semantic patterns, that are typically drawn upon under the specified conditions, along with the words and structures that are used in the realization of these meanings (1978: 23)..

Register is determined, by what is taking place, who is taking part and what part the language is playing (1978: 31). There is also a greater emphasis on the broader social context:

A register can be defined as the configuration of semantic resources that the member of a culture typically associates with a situation type. It is the meaning potential that is accessible in a given social context.

Halliday further makes the point that, while register may be recognized by its formal (i.e., linguistic) characteristics, its structure is semantic (ibid: 111). Hence, in this definition, the critical elements are seen to be firstly contextual, and secondly, linguistic. -

Following closely the work of Halliday, Gregory and Carroll (1978) see register as a useful abstraction linking variations of language to variations of social context' (1978: 64), 'a contextual category correlating groupings of linguistic features with recurrent situational features' (1978: 4). A further interpretation which similarly relates text to context defines register as 'a linguistic category, a property relating a given text, in terms of its formal, phonological or graphological, or substantial; features to similar texts in comparable situations, and thereby to features in the situation of utterance or composition', qualifying this with the statement that 'a given language will be said to have a register distinction at a certain point only if there are both linguistic and situational differences there' (Ellis and Ure

1969: 252). The common factor in these definitions of register is the view that both situational and linguistic variables should be an essential part of the process of register characterization.

Moreover, it is these situational variables that determine the function of the utterance, that specify register as a variety according to use. 'Language varies as its function varies; it differs in different situations. The label given to a variety of a language according to use is "register"' (Chiu 1973: 54); that is, function is a product of inter-relating situational variables;' and register is the product of functional variation.

Genre

However, for some theorists, the concept of 'register' is not sufficient to capture this mediating phenomenon. In more recent times, these theorists have found the concept of 'genre' more effective in representing that theoretical construct which intervenes between language function and language form. As a consequence, there is considerable variation in the definitions and conceptualization of the two terms, with some degree of overlap between the two concepts, as well as some basic differences in the usage of the concepts and terminology.

The emphasis of genre theorists is firmly on social and cultural factors as the generating factor of all action, including linguistic action. 'Genres are primarily defined as the socially ratified text-types in a community' (Kress and Threadgold 1988: 216). For genre theorists, the value of concepts of genre is that they offer

. . . certain theoretical categories to describe . . . the interface between the socio-cultural world and textual form . . . ways in which texts and the social agents which produce them construct and are constructed by the social and the cultural (1988: 216).

Halliday, however, still employs the term 'register' to encapsulate that relationship between texts and social processes. He employs 'genre' in a

limited sense, in the sense which has been common in literary discussions in the past. He sees 'generic structure' not as the embodiment of the text as social process, but as a single characteristic of a text, its organizational structure, 'outside the linguistic system'. It is one of three factors, generic structure, textual structure and cohesion, which distinguish text from non-text, and as such can be brought within the general framework of the concept of register (Halliday 1978: 145). However, he sees it as a feature of all text, even spontaneous conversation, and not as simply confined to literary texts. In other words, for Halliday, genre is a lower order semiotic concept; register the higher order semiotic concept, thus subsuming genre. The genre of a text, therefore, contributes to its register. He thus considers 'register', as he has defined it in the past, to be the concept which best represents the text—context relationship.

Genre theorists, however, reject any privileging of discursive structure in discussions of text. They reject concepts of genre which are confined mainly to discussions of literary texts, 'where genre is conceived of largely as a schema for action, a recipe for producing a text, . . . an autonomous formal characteristic of texts' (Threadgold 1989: 93). Typical of earlier interpretations of 'genre' is that of Hymes (1974), who sees genres as categories such as poem, myth, tale, riddle, etc: He says that 'the notion of genre implies the possibility of identifying formal characteristics, traditionally recognized' (Hymes 1974: 61). This limitation to purely formal categories is rejected as unable to account for the nature of language as a social process.

Genres are not simply schemas or frames for action. They involve, always, characteristic ways of 'text-making' (what in systemic—functional terms we could call mode), and characteristic sets of interpersonal relationships and meanings (Threadgold 1989: 96).

However, although genre theorists (such as Martin, Threadgold, Kress, Reid,) perceived register as insufficient to explain the relationship of text and context, they nevertheless acknowledge 'the Hallidayan tradition of linguistics' as the basis of their theories.

The genre theory underlying the so-called 'genre-based' approaches to writing development was developed by Hasan 1978, Kress 1982, Martin 1983 and others as an extension of earlier work on register by systemic linguistics including Halliday, Gregory, Ure and Ellis (Martin, Christie and Rothery, 1987: 119).

Furthermore, Threadgold freely admits that 'the use of the term genre in systemic theory is full of unresolved problems' (Threadgold 1986:

One of the claims of genre theorists is that 'genre theory differs from register theory in the amount of emphasis placed on social purpose as a determining variable in language use . . . In essence genre theory is a theory of language use' (Martin, Christie and Rothery 1987: 119). In other words, they see register theory as placing too little weight on social processes and hence functional aspects of texts. They see that register theory privileges linguistic features of texts over social context ('Linguistic choices . . . may well have generic implications; but genre does not result from linguistic choices' (Reid 1988: 34)), and context of situation over the broader social context ('they fall short of offering any explanation of action and institutions as social contexts in which subjects are constituted and pursue their aims within the parameters made possible by institutional structures and the various constraints which these exert on the media by which discourse is transmitted' (Threadgold 1986: 34)).

Given the original insistence by Halliday, Gregory and Carroll and Ure on the initiating force of contextual factors and linguistic function in the process of realization of meaning, this initially seems surprising. Halliday

defines register in terms 'of the associated of linguistic features with 'different types of situation'' (Halliday *et al.* 1964: 87), Gregory and Carroll (1978: 64) see it as 'linking variations of language to variations of social context', and Ure (Ellis and Ure) 1972: 252) perceives it as an association of linguistic features and 'features in the situation of utterance or composition'.

It may, however, be a product of the earlier emphasis on the linguistic characteristics of register, the expense of contextual or functional characteristics. While Halliday has always insisted on the determining nature of contextual factors in specifying register, he also says in an early work (1964: 89) that 'if two samples of language activity from what, on non-linguistic grounds, could be considered different situation-types show no differences in grammar or lexis, they are assigned to one and the same register'. This apparent downgrading of contextual factors in the specification of register is perhaps partially responsible for the interpretation over the intervening years of register as referring primarily to linguistic

An example of such an interpretation is that of Wallace (1981: 267) who defines register as 'a complex of features including appropriate lexical items, stylistic devices, frequency of certain grammatical transformations, discourse structure, etc.', indicating the emphasis on linguistic features without reference to the contextual background giving rise to such features.

Such interpretations formed the basis in those intervening years for theory and practice, particularly in the field of language teaching, which was based on linguistic analysis, paying little heed to contextual factors at any level.

Halliday himself acknowledges this early over-emphasis on lexicogrammar (1978: 110), and attempts in a later work to correct it, asserting that, while a register is 'recognizable as a particular selection of words and structures', it must be defined 'in terms of meanings It is the selec-

tion (111). He goes on to say that 'instead of characterizing a register largely by its lexicogrammatical properties, we shall suggest . . . a more abstract definition in semantic terms' (1978: 110-111). This definition places the emphasis on register as the configuration of semantic resources; the meaning potential accessible in a given social context. However, despite this later revision of emphasis, the term register has become identified in the minds of many language specialists as being involved primarily with linguistic characteristics rather than on the contexts which generate them.

There is a further difference in emphasis in the application of the two concepts of register and genre which involves the 'confusion . . . between context in the sense of "immediate context of utterance" and the wider context of culture', referred to briefly above (Kress and Threadgold 1988: 226). Genre theorists move away from the emphasis of register theory on the context of situation, as they stress the interactive and cyclical nature of text-context relationship, and perceive context in its broadest sense as reaching out to the wider culture. Threadgold asserts that it is insufficient

to "discuss the linguistic process in terms of situation types and their corresponding genres.

What we need to know is how institutions and institutionalized power relationships and knowledges are both constructed by and impose constraints on (and restrict access to) possible situation-types and genres (1989: 97).

Kress and Threadgold draw attention to the paradoxical situation where 'literary texts are usually supposed to elide in some way the former [context of situation], while still being constrained by the latter [context of culture]. On the other hand, the texts of casual, conversation are often described as if they were constrained only by the former' (1988: 226).

Any theory which seeks to dichotomize form and content is rejected by genre theorists. A text cannot be 'separated from [its] participation in historical, social, and political processes' (Threadgold 1989). Instead genre theorists seek to 'understand the ways in which lexicogrammatical patterns in texts are globally contextualized so as to [realize particular important social functions]' (Kress and Threadgold 1988: 216). Genres are seen to derive their conventions 'from a general and differentiated semiotics rather than from a linguistics' (Freadman 1988: 91).

Text and context

The nature of text in the view of genre theorists is neatly summed up by Kress (1985: 18).

Texts arise in specific social situations and they are constructed with specific purposes by one or more speakers or writers. Meanings find their expression in text - though their origins of meanings are outside the text - and are negotiated (about) in texts, in concrete situation of social exchange.

These situations, he claims, in 'their characteristic features and structures, . . . the purposes of the participants, the goals of the participants' (1985: 19) determine the form of the resulting text. It is from the conventionalized forms of such situations or occasions that genres, or conventionalized forms of text, arise.

Kress characterizes genres as providing a precise index and catalogue of the relevant social occasions of a community at a given time'. He sees that the meanings of texts are not only derived from the meaning contained within the discourse (systems of meanings arise out of the organization of social institutions), but also from the meanings of the genre, or meanings about the conventionalized social occasions from which texts arise (1985: 20).

The interaction between text and context is seen in the form of the 'nexus

between language and society', where 'language fixes a world that is so much more stable and coherent than what we actually see that it takes its place in our consciousness and becomes what we think we have seen' (Kress and Hodge 1979: 5). So firmly established is that nexus that 'language, which is given by society, determines which perceptions are potentially social ones. These perceptions, fixed in language, 'become a kind of second nature. We inevitably impose our classification on others, and on ourselves' (1985: 5).

It is very clear, then, that any description of linguistic form is meaningless unless it incorporates an acknowledgement and description of the broader social context, 'the social occasion' of the text: 'without immediate and direct relations to the social context, the forms and functions of language are not fully explicable' (Kress and Hodge 1979: 13). In contrast, it seems that, in discussion of register, it has been the case that the form of the text frequently takes prior place, and context and linguistic functions follow: for theorists of register, a register is primarily essentially constituted by linguistic features which are then 'associated with a configuration of situation. features' (Halliday 1976: 22).

The tendency of register theorists to privilege linguistic structure in theory and consequently in the practice of linguistic analysis has been conducive to a concentration of such work on text as a linguistic product. The outcome of this position is the assumption of a primarily synoptic view of texts which ignores the probabilistic, dynamic aspects of their performance.

Genre theorists claim that the concept of genre, with its dual emphasis on all contextual levels and linguistic structure, allows a dual focus, the synoptic focus of text as product, and the dynamic focus of text as process.

Genres are both 'products' and 'processes' – 'systems' and 'performances'. Each time a text is produced so as to realize and construct a situation-type it becomes the model for another text and another situation-type. As a model, it functions like a static, finished product or a system according to which new texts can be constructed. Once the constructing begins it becomes again a dynamic process, a 'performance' which will inevitably change the model with which it begins. This means that we have to teach the interpersonal and textual characteristic of genres, the probabilistic, dynamic aspects of their performance as well as their schematic structures (Threadgold 1989: 100).

The concept of genre has undoubtedly been 'associated with whole interactions, or whole texts, whereas the term register is frequently used to refer to sections within a text which are characterized by certain linguistic forms. I believe that this is a useful distinction to retain, in order to allow for discussion of passages or sections of texts; it frequently occurs that certain sections of a text show patterns which are not characteristic of the text as a whole:

register patterns may be borrowed into a shorter stretch of a longer text, so that the shorter stretch is marked by features other than those that characterize the text as a whole (Essex 1972: 52).

Birch and O'Toole (1988: 2-3) see genre as 'the social relevance of a text, but refer to 'the different registers in the poem' and 'shifts in lexical register' (1988: 11).

This distinction between whole texts and sections of texts is made by Bakhtin (1986), although he universally applies the term 'genre'. Bakhtin distinguishes between primary (simple) and secondary (complex) genres, where secondary genres absorb and digest various primary (simple) genres that have taken form in unmediated speech communion' (1986: 82). Although he claims no difference in function, he perceives that primary utterances or genres lose their immediate relation to actual reality when they constitute a section of a secondary genre, such as when a rejoinder of everyday dialogue (primary) is contained within a novel (secondary). I suggest that the term 'register' has developed an association with primary or simple genres, that is texts or sections of texts which take the form of shorter utterances, spoken and written, while secondary or complex genres have become identified with the term genre proper.

Bakhtin used the concept of 'speech genres' to refer to the 'relatively stable thematic, compositional and stylistic types of utterances' which are determined by a specific nature of the particular sphere of communication (1986: 64), as well as 'semantic (thematic) considerations, the concrete situation of the speech communication, the personal composition of its participants and so on' (1986: 78). Diversity arises in everyday genres such as greetings, farewells, etc. as they vary according to 'the situation, social position, and personal interrelations of the participants in the communication' (1988: 79). A comparison, therefore, between Halliday's definition of register and Bakhtin's definition of genre shows that there is a considerable degree of commonality: both hinge the definitions on linguistic and situational characteristics. What is at issue, of course, is the nature of the definitions.

Discourse

What emerges from the arguments put forward by both schools is that, while registers are free to mediate in any communicative event, socially identified or informal, complete or incomplete, genres are taken to represent those events which have been culturally recognized. While the concept of register is postulated as a relationship between text and context, genre is defined as 'a staged, goal oriented social process' which is used 'to embrace each of the linguistically realized activity types which comprise so much of our culture' (Martin, Christie and Rothery 1987: 120).

It is Halliday's view that such a distinction is unnecessary (personal communication), and he adheres to the concept of register as a sufficient

concept to specify the relationship between text and context at all levels. While I believe that, this is undoubtedly true, it is inescapable that for many the term 'register' has developed a semantic value over the past twenty-five years of usage and application. No definitions, no matter how influential, can override this semantic value, which includes constraints, limitations and restrictions of its original conceptualization. Hence the semantic value with which it is attributed by theorists and practitioners in the field today does not necessarily coincide with the original value attributed to it by Halliday.

However, there are those who accept Halliday's definitions and remain uninfluenced by later interpretations and practice. The two terms are often used interchangeably. Frow (1983: 93), working from Halliday's 'development of the concept of register', says that

Discourse genre or register is a conventional institution: a normative codification of different levels of meaning appropriate to a type of situation. Discourse . . . is the production of a unified cluster of semantic, structural, and contextual meanings in accordance with generic norms. The codification of meanings appropriate to a situation is ultimately a function of the ideological formation, and different social classes and sexual classes will encode the genres of discourse with different semantic potentials.

Frow, then, finds it unnecessary to make distinctions between whole and part texts in this way, and accepts the interpretation as originally offered by Halliday.

Fairclough (1985, 1988) interprets register as an ideologically particular, situation-specific meaning potential' (Fairclough 1985: 112), preferring this to Halliday's interpretation, as 'it ties register to ideological diversity and relations of power' (p. 116). It is 'ideological' in that it represents a particular social base. He claims that 'it makes little sense to study verbal interactions as if they were unconnected with social structures' (Fairclough 1985: 746). He sees verbal interaction as a mode of social action which presupposes a range of structures which are reflected in the 'knowledge base' or 'background knowledge' (BGK) which incorporates:

- knowledge of language codes
- knowledge of principles and norms of language use
- knowledge of situation
- knowledge of the world

(1985: 744)

However, BGK often becomes 'naturalized' or assumed to be non-ideological 'common sense' and hence dissociated from that social base. To incorporate both ideological and discourse structures in the discussion of register, he develops the term 'ideological-discursive formation' (1988: 113).

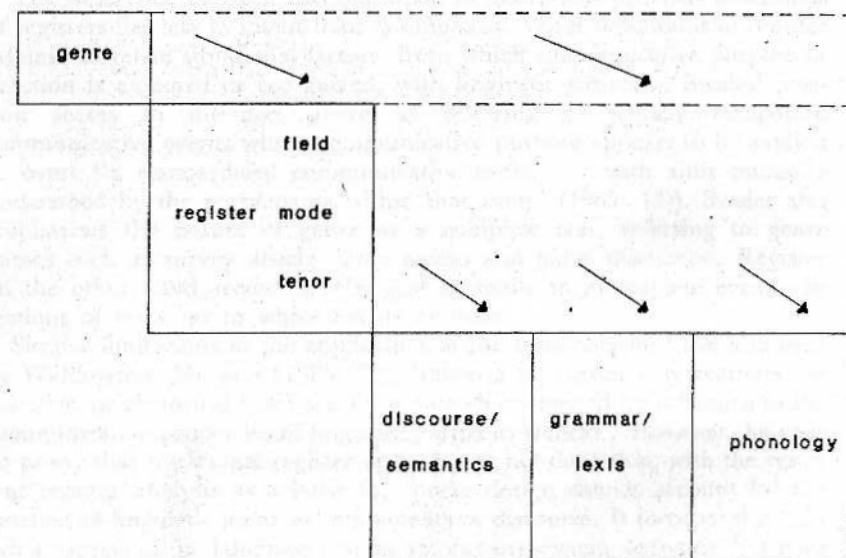


Figure 2.1 Language and context
(Martin, 1988: 17)

An attempt to resolve this conflict in terminology and hence in conceptualization is made by Martin (1982: 2), who perceives the two concepts in mutual relationship. He accepts the Hallidayan concept of register as 'the study of the [systematic] relation between language and its context' (1980: 7):

There are two aspects to knowledge of register. Firstly, it entails understanding how the context of situation influences language use and secondly, it involves knowledge of a description of English (1981: 7).

This definition is consistent with definitions of Halliday, Gregory and Carroll and Ure. However, in view of the constraints on the term discussed above, Martin goes further, distinguishing register from genre, and placing register as a semiotic system intervening between genre above and language below, where 'language is treated as the phonology of register and register the phonology of genre' (1982: 2).

For him, the advantage of using the concepts of both register and genre means that 'instead of setting field, mode and tenor variables for whole texts as has been customary in register theory, values can be adjusted from one state to the next' (Martin 1986: 40).

Language teaching

Language teaching, which traditionally deals with the non-literary genres, has tended to favour register theory, and hence has incorporated the emphases described above. This has involved a privileging of linguistic features at the expense of contextual features, a focus on partial rather than complete texts, and little acknowledgement of the influence of the broader context of culture, some of which has been recognized by certain language teaching theorists.

Swales (1985) and Widdowson (1983) have both drawn attention to the degacy of register analysis as it has been practised in the past as a tool for developing ESL/EAP/ESP syllabuses and methodologies. Like the genre theorists, Swales (1985: 12) too perceives that the term 'register' is associated with an emphasis on linguistic structure at the expense of contextual features and thus prefers to employ the concept of genre. He claims that studies in genre analysis 'differ from traditional register or sub-register analysis in the importance they attach to communicative purposes within a communicative setting'. For him, genres place an emphasis on communicative purpose which he feels is lacking in traditional views of language teaching:

Within language across the curriculum there are many recurring communicative situations that involve types of task and types of text Such regularized text-task interactions I shall call genres . . . I accept that they can be differentiated according to the sort of information represented, but I do not so easily accept that topic-typing (classification, structure, etc.) is the only or even the main criterion for this differentiation. I think we have also to take communicative purpose very much into account (Swales 1988: 12).

Swales then goes on to define genre explicitly in relation to his own concept of language teaching (1985: 13):

- a. A genre is a recognized communicative event with a shared public purpose and
- b. A genre is, within variable degrees of freedom, a structured and standardized communicative event with constraints on allowable contributions in terms of their positioning, form and intent.
- c. Overt knowledge of the conventions of a genre is likely to be much greater in those who routinely or professionally operate with that genre rather than in those who become involved in it only occasionally.
- d. Societies give genre names to types of communicative event that they recognize as recurring. Named genres are manifested through spoken or written texts (or both) and their associated text-based tasks.
- e. Modified genre-names (survey article, issue memo, panel discussion) indicate features that a speech community finds salient and thus provide a way into sub-genres.

The difference between this definition of genre and previous definitions of registers lies less in intent than in emphasis. While definitions of register attempt to relate situational factors, from which communicative purpose or function is assumed or recognized, with linguistic structure, Swales' position seems to interpret genre as referring to socially recognized communicative events where communicative purpose appears to be explicit or overt. A standardized communicative event . . . with aims mutually understood by the participants within that event' (1985: 13)). Swales also emphasizes the nature of genre as a complete text, referring to genre names such as survey article, issue memo and panel discussion. Register on the other hand seems to refer just as easily to incomplete events, or sections of texts, as to whole events or texts.

Similar limitations in the application of the term 'register' are also seen by Widdowson. He says (1983: 28), 'there is no reason why registers, or varieties, or rhetorical types should not be characterized by reference to the communicative properties of linguistic forms in context'. However, he goes on to say that traditional register analysis has not done this, with the result that register analysis as a basis for course design cannot account for the function of linguistic items as components of discourse. It incorporates only 'what aspects of the language system accompany certain activities' but does not incorporate any understanding of 'HOW they are used as an intrinsic element of these activities' (1983: 33), and that 'register analysis . . . is an operation on text and does not, as such, reveal how language is used in the discourse process' (Widdowson 1983: 28).

Widdowson sees that basing analysis on the concept of genre may offer advantages:

The value of such analysis is that it provides a characterization of the communicative conventions associated with particular areas of language use and takes us beyond the itemization of notions and functions into larger schematic units upon which procedural work can effectively operate (Widdowson 1983: 102).

However, he also sees limitations or possible dangers in the application of genre analysis in that 'in revealing typical textualizations, it might lead us to suppose that form-function correlations are fixed and can be learned as formulae, and so to minimize the importance of the procedural aspect of language use and learning' (Widdowson 1983: 103).

Hence, in understanding the process of linguistic realization of meaning, and further the process of language learning and language teaching, it is critical that the theoretician and the teacher are aware that 'the relationship between the form and content of texts is not arbitrary or conventional, but that it is determined (and constrained) culturally, socially and ideologically by the power of institutional/discursive formations' (Birch 1989: 1). One must understand, according to Threadgold, that 'to teach genres, discourses and stories is inevitably to make 'visible' the social construction and transmission of ideologies, power relationships, and social identities' (1989: 100).

I propose that both the terms register and genre have their place for the language theoretician and practitioner, as both offer slightly different insights into the linguistic process. The term 'register' tends to be the more neutral, generalized and embracing term, having a wider currency in the language teaching area, and a stronger historical basis. It tends to suggest a focus on the linguistic side of the text-context paradigm, on 'patterns of lexis and syntax rather than on discourse structure or textual organization, and on sections of discourse smaller than the whole text. 'Genre', in contrast, has the force of suggesting the priority of the context as a 'conventionalized occasion' over linguistic forms and patterns, the text as a complete event, with formalized organizational schemata.

We-must be able to analyse both the linguistic components and the situational components of language events, each on a number of dimensions at the same time; this is necessary to enable us to identify which linguistic variables co-vary with which situational variables (University of Essex 1972: 54).

On this basis, I conclude firstly that any attempt to characterize language, or variation within a language, must work through the concepts of register and genre, and secondly that any characterization of register/genre, or particular registers/genres must specify both contextual features at various levels as well as linguistic features.

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