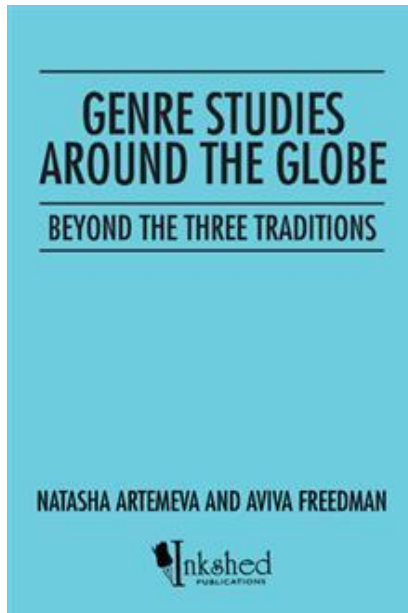


BOOK REVIEW



MANY FACETS OF GENRE RESEARCH

Natasha Artemeva and Aviva Freedman (Eds.). GENRE STUDIES AROUND THE GLOBE: BEYOND THE THREE TRADITIONS (2015), Edmonton, AB, Canada: Inkshed Publications. 470 pp., ISBN 978-1-4907-6633-7 (SC).

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The volume *Genre Studies around the Globe: Beyond the Three Traditions*, edited by Natasha Artemeva and Aviva Freedman, represents a valuable contribution to the development of non-literary genre studies. The volume is based on the Conference “Genre 2012: Rethinking Genre 20 Years Later” held in June 2012 at the Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada. The book combines papers from three prominent Anglophone traditions in genre studies, defined by a well-known and much cited Hyon’s (1996) paper: (1) English for Specific Purposes (ESP); (2) North American New Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS); and (3) the Sidney School of Genre – Australian Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), but the volume also includes approaches to genre studies from different national linguistic and cultural contexts.

The first contribution to this volume is a paper about a paper (Chapter 1) – John Swales revisits Hyon’s paper and discusses its impact on the development and promotion of genre studies, providing quantitative data to support his claim. Swales observes that the three traditions have mainly survived, although there have been attempts to find a middle ground for the three approaches. He points to the Brazilian approach, which combines ESP and SFL approaches to genre analysis,

as well as the Academic Literacies movement or New London School that focuses on actual academic practices rather than being excessively textual.

In Chapter 2, titled “Critical Reflections on Genre Analysis”, Vijay Bhatia moves away from the field of pedagogical aspects of ESP towards the world of professions, claiming that only a combination of different perspectives can provide a comprehensive picture of the field. To this end, he proposes a three-space model. Studying different corporate communicative strategies that combine a range of discourses to promote their corporate image and interests, Bhatia claims that this process does not include only construction of routine corporate documents but a corporate strategy of exploiting interdiscursive space in order to reach corporate objectives through “interdiscursivity”. He also uses the term “colonization” to describe how the involvement of legal practitioners in the arbitration process leads to an increasing mixture of rule-related discourses. According to Bhatia, in addition to discursive and professional practices, genre analysis also contributes to our understanding of organizational and institutional practices. The third concept, “discursive performance” is another characteristic of genre analysis which extends from analysis of genres as discursive products to “professional practice that all discursive acts tend to accomplish”, referring to this process as “critical genre analysis” (pp. 21-22).

James R. Martin, in Chapter 3 entitled “One of Three Traditions: Genre, Functional Linguistics, and the ‘Sydney School’” deals with how genre is modelled in SFL as well as with the issues of context and change. Martin presents a stratified content plane, which makes SFL distinctive among functional theories. The model is presented through co-tangential circles, the first one being phonology, the second lexicogrammar and the third discourse semantics. These strata are related through the concept of metaredundancy. According to Martin, “genre can be defined as a recurrent configuration of meaning, selection of appropriate field, tenor and mode varieties and staging them as unfolding phrases of meaningful discourse” (p. 37). Martin and his colleagues noticed that in the Australian curriculum knowledge about language (KAL) was removed and learning was mainly student-centered. They reintroduced KAL, but instead of grammar, they started with genre as “a staged, goal-oriented social process” (p. 37).

In Chapter 4 “A Genre Based Theory of Literate Action” Charles Bazerman proposes that “genres exist on different levels of specificity and on different principles” (p. 81), and that they are identified based on the process of recognition and use and not on the characteristics of language and texts. He also claims that genres are a matter of perception of practitioners rather than theory and that only such genres are theoretically sustainable as long as they rely on social understandings. Authors make assumptions and create genres following certain forms and models. Likewise, readers have to make assumptions about the intentions authors expressed in their texts. However, with the change of technologies genres move into new directions. Bazerman sees the power of

typification processes and says that written genres change the way of life and our system of knowledge.

Orlando Vian Jr., the author of Chapter 5 “Beyond the Three Traditions in Genre Studies: A Brazilian Perspective” does not see the Brazilian approach to genre studies as a uniform tradition. This approach combines “the ESP- and SFL-types of genre analysis with a more critical approach”. In addition, Vian relies on the Brazilian post-colonial context in which he puts genre studies. In this context, Latin American cultures are hybrid by combining Latin American tradition with modern global developments. Such an approach meets the contextual and pedagogical needs of the post-colonial reality. According to the national curriculum parameters, Brazilian pedagogical and educational practices for both mother tongue and foreign language teaching should be genre-based, just like in Australia.

Chapter 6 “A Genre-Based Study Across the Discourses of Undergraduate and Graduate Disciplines: Written Language Use in University Settings” by Giovanni Parodi deals with the identification, description and quantitative assessment of academic genres from seven different disciplines at the undergraduate and graduate level for native speakers of Spanish. Parodi offers a three-dimensional conception of genre: linguistic, cognitive and social. According to him, linguistic dimension plays a crucial role and it “becomes a concrete manifestation of a more abstract entity” (p. 119). In his corpus Parodi identified 30 genres which are further analysed in detail in the chapter.

“Genre Change and Evolutions” is the title of Chapter 7 in which Carolyn R. Miller agrees with previous contributors to this volume that while there is a stability of larger structures (genres) their constituent parts are prone to change, although we still try to understand stability and change. Listing all sorts of new genres, in old and new media, the author claims that we need them in order to position ourselves in the mediated socio-cultural world. Miller points to the biological term “fitness” which can be related to genre and which shows that variations are selected and preserved, but are also adapted to situations.

Anis Bawarshi, in Chapter 8 “Accounting for Genre Performances: Why Uptake Matters”, just like Parodi, sees genres both as social and cognitive phenomena, but adds, following Anne Freedman, also one of the contributors to this edited volume, that genre research has not dealt much with genre uptake, i.e. “taking up or performance of genres in moments of interaction and innovation” (p. 186). He is actually interested in what happens in-between and around genres, rather than in genres themselves, proposing focus on extra textual factors. Bawarshi’s text focuses on uptake as a situated cognitive and social transaction and the fact that certain genres are connected to other genres, coordinating complex forms of social action.

In Chapter 9 “Form Alone: The Supreme Court of Canada Reading Historical Treaties” Janet Giltrow starts from the claim that rhetorical genre theory insists that genre is not form alone. She introduces the notions of context and inference as they are understood in pragmatics, but, unlike pragmatic theorists, genre theorists

have not been impressed by the efficiency of language users to search and activate areas of consciousness in order to infer meanings. The difference in the focus of the two disciplines is that pragmatics looks into conversational snippets, while genre analysis takes into account non-conversational genres involved in “spheres of activity”, which narrows down the range of assumptions. In this way genre analysis may help pragmatics in understanding how language users construct mutual consciousness. The paper discusses these issues from the point of view of legal genres.

Chapter 10 “Challenges in the New Multimodal Environment of Research Genres: What Future do Articles of the Future Promise us?” by Jan Engberg and Daniela Maier deals with the use of media other than the traditional academic paper in academic knowledge communication. This includes semiotic modes other than writing, such as academic visual or video essays, as well as video peer-reviewed academic journals. The authors present “a project which systematically explores and maps the multimodal creation, representation, and dissemination of academic knowledge through new generic configurations and across several media” (p. 226).

In Chapter 11 “Genre Profiles as Intermediate Analytical Level for Cultural Genre Analysis”, Martin Luginbühl claims that differences among genres on the micro level can be connected with the macro level of national and even global culture. This is due to a problematic conceptualization of culture but also “due to the lack of an intermediate analytical level between the macro level of genre features and macro level of culture” (p. 251). For this purpose, the author introduces the concept of *genre profile*, an analytical level consisting of genre repertoires, genre frequency and genre clusters, presenting also an interesting comparative analysis of the American “CBS Evening News” and the Swiss “Tagesschau”.

Natasha Rulyova in Chapter 12 “Genre and Identity in Social Media” presents blogs as a form of social media and how bloggers shape different identities using a range of genres. She relies on the notions of genre as social action and a discursive conception of identity in her case study of the blogs of the Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny. Understanding blog as a multi-modal text, she also applies Kresse’s social semiotic approach to communication and van Leeuwen’s notion of discourse as the recontextualization of social practice. She proposes that a change of context recontextualises identity through the use of genre. According to her, genre analysis, being “a frame of social action”, is a good way of examining the content of social media that are actually performed through genres.

Chapter 13 “Genre, Knowledge and Pedagogy in the Sydney School”, authored by David Rose, is a thorough review of the SFL approach to genre. He refers to Firth’s ideas that inspired Halliday and later Martin and others to develop the layers of phonology, lexicogrammar and discourse, with the context as crucial in defining meaning. He notes that Martin uses the term *register* to refer to context. All these insights were a basis of a project that tried to see how genres function in

schools. He describes knowledge genres and presents them in the two phases in which they were described and discusses ways in which curriculum genres are described.

“Bending Genres, or When is a Deviation an Innovation?” is the title of Chapter 14 in which Christine M. Tardy discusses when and why a text written in an unconventional way may be seen as innovative versus deviant. Genres are seen as conventional texts used by discourse communities. However, Tardy says that little is known about how writers bend generic conventions. She looks into how students and academic writers play, innovate but especially improvise with genres. Tardy focuses on three theoretical approaches relevant for genre innovation – creativity theory, system theory and social theory of symbolic capital. She examines this in a classroom environment with undergraduate students of environmental science.

Chapter 15 “Students as Genre Scholars: ESL/EFL Classroom Approaches”, whose author is Ann Johns, deals with the student perspective of genre. Students are often taught genres as fixed structures, which is not in line with the changing trends of genres. Johns is interested in making students aware of texts and their contexts and being focused on deep reading and challenging writing tasks, in other words to become genre scholars. For this purpose, she proposes some approaches, relying on two schools – English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and New Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS) and presents useful pedagogical tips.

In Chapter 16 “Translating Practice into Theory in Genre Studies”, Amy Devitt tries to establish why there is discrepancy between the research on the nature of genres and genre pedagogies and how the two approaches can benefit from each other. She adds that theory and pedagogy have different purposes, methods and audiences and that each belongs to different bodies of scholarship. Devitt claims that translating theory into practice goes into one direction and argues that the opposite should also be the case. She promotes the idea of genre studies that translate theory into practice and practice into theory, where this action is in constant motion.

Chapter 17 “A Genre-Based Approach Underlying Didactic Sequences for the Teaching of Languages” by Vera Lúcia Lopes Cristovão discusses the pedagogical aspect of genre from the Brazilian perspective. She mentions the three leading genre approaches, adding another labelled as *socio-discursive interactionism* (SDI). She specifies that the Brazilian genre research can be identified with all traditions that inform “pedagogical practice” and offers a short socio-historical background of SDI-based genre approach and its Brazilian versions.

The author of the last chapter titled “The Traps and Trappings of Genre Theory” is Anne Freadman. Freadman mentions “fundamentally different conceptions of genre” (p. 426). At the 2012 Conference at Carleton University these diverse approaches were reconciled through a dialogue and exploration of possible convergences among three major traditions of genre studies. The author also discusses the discontinuation of the old tradition of genre theory with the current

work, which shows dynamism in the development of this field. Following Bazerman, Anne Freedman puts focus on the significance of genre for people's lives, social systems and communicative social spaces "that constitute who we are on any occasion" (p. 428).

This book is an excellent overview of three prevailing traditions in genre analysis: (1) English for Specific Purposes (ESP); (2) New Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS); and (3) Australian Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) as well as the "middle ground" approaches to genre studies. In addition, there are chapters dealing with genre from different perspectives, presenting genre analysis as an interdisciplinary field of research.

Obviously, new genres appear with the development of society and technologies, while the existing genres are exposed to internal change, adapting to new circumstances in the changing world. Genres are seen as linguistic, social and cognitive concepts that do not exist separately but are interlinked. They also influence our knowledge, way of thinking and understanding the world around us. In addition, genre researches see a need for linking genre theory with classroom practice, which is now not always the case.

There have been differences in the approach to genre studies, but it seems that the Conference held in 2012 has led to converging trends, paving the way to new insights into genres and a fresh look into their developments and future trends. Genre analysis has now become a multi-faceted discipline, reflecting the needs of the societies it serves. It is no wonder then that the three major traditions have spawned and opened room for further developments. This book is a valuable contribution to genre analysis, which can be of use to all those who deal with genre research and those who are just beginning to explore this field.

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