

A Survey of Genre Analysis as a Relatively New Field of Discourse Analysis in the Academic and Professional Fields

Lecturer: Firas Abdul-Muni'm Jawad

Abstract:

The present study tries to offer a survey to a relatively new branch of discourse analysis, namely, genre analysis. This linguistic branch has been established by John Swales in 1981. It deals with the text/discourse scheme or structure classified and arranged in obligatory and optional major and minor parts. The major parts are called 'moves' whereas the minor ones are called 'steps'. The early studies conducted in this field were limited to academic writing. Later, works in genre analysis field has witnessed dramatic expansion when professional genres ,i.e., text types have been considered for investigation.

Introduction:

Problem: the problem dealt with by the present study is that Genre Analysis (GA, henceforth) has not received enough attention in Iraq in spite of its distinct significance. A very few studies in this field has been conducted locally as far as the researcher knows.

Significance:

The present study tries to be of some theoretical and pedagogical significance. Theoretically, a reasonable survey could offer some necessary introduction to GA in order to encourage some researchers to work within this field. Pedagogically, the present study helps in developing two important language learning skills, namely, writing and reading. Writing skill could be developed when the writer's capacity to outline or structure or arrange the parts or moves of the intended piece of writing is developed. Similarly, reading skill ,i.e., comprehending what is written is based on several bases of which understanding the design of the written text is one.

Limitation: the present study is limited to survey analyzing genres in the academic and professional fields.

Theoretical background:

The traditional linguistics had its own consideration of language. It was believed traditionally that language should be learnt and taught at its highest level. Traditionalists, who were basically grammarians believed that the language used by the best authors should be the adopted linguistic parameter or model. The illustrative linguistic examples as well as best authors should have the linguistic authority in determining the appropriate approach of teaching and learning language.

De Saussure , in the modern linguistics has adopted a revolutionary set of linguistic principles contradicting with some or most traditional ones. He believes that the linguistic theory should consider the real language used by the common speakers of ordinary people rather than the best authors. Thus, the linguistic theory has shifted its interest from what is supposed to what is available.

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Linguists begin studying language at all linguistic levels paying a special attention to grammar which focuses basically on investigating sentence structure. The sentence has received this great attention since it is thought to be the basic communicative unit in language offering a complete idea unlike a mere phoneme, morpheme, lexeme or even a phrase. That is why the linguistic school adopting this idea is called 'structuralism.'

One of the controversial points between traditionalists and structuralists is universality. Is grammar universal or language-specific? Traditionalists believe in language universality taking Latin as a model language containing universal rules applicable to all languages. Structuralism, as expressed by Boas did not believe in language universality since every single language has its own language systems that meet its speakers needs in its specific way. Chomsky adopts another viewpoint in the case of universality. He believes in human language universality, i.e., all languages share the general linguistic features and levels like, phonology, morphology, grammar, etc. He claims that all human languages have the same basic components structured mentally what is called deep structure. The deep structure (DS) is "the abstract syntactic representation of a sentence –un underlying level of structural organization which specifies all the factors governing the way the sentence should be interpreted. The second level is labeled 'surface structure' (SS) The surface structure of a sentence is "the final stage in the syntactic representation of a sentence, which provides the input to the phonological component of the grammar, and which thus most closely corresponds to the structure of the sentence we articulate and hear." Chomsky believes that languages differ only in the surface structure in which different items of different grammatical categories are arranged differently (in a specific way). Shifting the arrangement or structure of the basic linguistic elements into the final form of the structure is called transformation. That is why Chomsky's theory is called 'transformational.' Chomsky proposes that the appropriate linguistic theory is that one that could investigate the transforming of deep structure into surface structure to all human languages. Additionally, Chomsky sees that children could say correct meaningful sentences that are completely new to them. This discovery leads Chomsky to claim generativism to his theory where language users could create an unlimited number of correct sentences out of a limited number of grammatical rules. That is why his theory is called 'generative' to make the full name of the theory 'transformational generative grammar.' Thus, linguistics shifts its attention from what is available to what is possible.

Even Chomsky's transformational generative grammar suffers from criticism. It is limited to sentence whereas the communicative unit is basically a discourse rather than an individual sentence. Discourse could be larger than one sentence or a complete single sentence or a part of a sentence, a phrase for example or even one single word or even simply silence where saying something is done by saying nothing just like keeping silence to show dis/agreement according to the question. The need to study language at a level higher than a single sentence results in introducing discourse analysis (DA, henceforth). Since 1960s, discourse analysis has been defined as "the analysis of linguistic behaviour, written and spoken, beyond the limits of individual sentences focusing

primarily on the meaning constructed and interpreted as language is used in particular social contexts"(Bhatia, Flowerdew and Jones: 2008:1). Discourse analysis fields have been developed, divided and subdivided to include many sublinguistic fields like register and genre analysis, critical discourse analysis, discursive psychology, conversation analysis, interactional sociolinguistics, the ethnography of communication, stylistics, mediated discourse analysis, corpus-based analysis, narrative analysis, multimodal discourse analysis, rhetorical-grammatical analysis, argumentative analysis and many others(Bhatia, Flowerdew and Jones: 2008:3). DA witnesses some dramatic expansion and it starts dealing with many linguistic aspects and phenomena. One of these phenomena is the scheme or underlying structure of discourse. Scheme plays an important role in comprehending and producing discourse since processing a given discourse begins with a mental plan. This mental plan, which is also called macrostructure, functions effectively in getting coherence of a discourse. Dijk (1983:46) defines 'macrostructure' as being "introduced to provide an abstract semantic description of the global content and then the global coherence of discourse." An explicit relationship between macrostructure and coherence is established and recognized here. Widdowson (2007:132) also refers to the important role of the mental plan in ordering reality as well as communication when defining a scheme. The concept of 'scheme' has been more elaborated on by Widdowson (ibid.) who defines it as " a mental structure taken for granted assumptions about how reality is ordered (ideational schemata) and how communication is managed (interpersonal schemata)."Richards, Platt J. and Platt H. (1992: 323) focus on the role of the mental or underlying structure in deciding the text / discourse organization. Scheme is defined as "the underlying structure which accounts for the organization of a TEXT or DISCOURSE" (ibid.). Dijk (1983: 48) claims that 'scheme' plays an important role in discourse comprehension since it "provides the reader with a basis for interpreting the text ... Text bases are the result of this marriage between schema knowledge and text."

Expecting major parts of a discourse results in recognizing its scheme. Such an expectation enables the listener/reader to recognize the missing information as well as irrelevant information or deviations if there is any. Recognizing these different kinds of information enables the addresser consider their value. Dijk (1983: 48) says that "missing information can be assigned default values if it appears insignificant, or it can be actively looked for in the text. Deviations from the scheme either may be accepted and registered, or if they appear to be major ones, may become the basis for a problem-solving effort trying to account for them."

Discourse schemata differ according to discourse /text types. Every text type, i.e., genre has its own distinctive scheme. However, 'genre' itself should be defined before getting into details of different structures of different genres.

The descriptive scheme will be focused on in the present study adopting Swales' (1990) model for analyzing genre. Swales (ibid.) defines 'genre' as follows:

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A genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style. Communicative purpose is both a privileged criterion and one that operates to keep the scope of a genre as here conceived narrowly focused on comparable rhetorical action. In addition to purpose, exemplars of a genre exhibit various patterns of similarity in terms of structure, style, content and intended audience. If all high probability expectations are realized, the exemplar will be viewed as prototypical by the parent discourse community. The genre names inherited and produced by discourse communities and imported by others constitute valuable ethnographic communication, but typically need further validation.

Bhatia (1993:13) states that a 'genre' is a "recognizable communicative event characterized by a set of communicative purpose(s) identified and mutually understood by the members of the professional or academic community in which it regularly occurs." It is clear that what has been focused on is the language use, i.e., communicative purpose. This new branch of DA is called genre analysis (GA, henceforth). Bhatia (1993:11) defines 'GA' as being "an insightful and thick description of academic and professional texts (which) has become a powerful and useful tool to arrive at significant form-function correlations which can be utilized for a number of applied linguistic purposes." GA thus, "combines grammatical insights with corresponding socio-cognitive and cultural explanations. It aims at explaining language in use rather than linguistic forms on the surface level."(ibid.)

Lakic (2008) defines GA as "an analytical framework which reveals not only the utilizable form-function correlation but also contributes significantly to our understanding of the cognitive structuring of information in specific areas of language use." Bhatia, Flowerdew and Jones (2008:10) state that the motivation behind establishing GA was "to use the findings for the teaching and learning of English for Specific Purposes."

Swales did the first genre-based analysis in 1981 as mentioned in Bhatia (1993:30). He investigated forty eight research article introductions from various scientific branches such as physical, biological as well as social sciences in addition to linguistics. His work offered an analytical model consisting of four moves that appeared in a predictable order. Every single move consisted of several optional and/or obligatory steps. A move, since it is the principle unit of analysis, is to be obviously recognized and defined. Swales (1990), as quoted in Ding (2007:369) states that a move is "a functional unit in a text used for some identifiable purpose." Although the move's functional side is recognized as a means for identifying a given communicative purpose, there is still some areas of the definition to be covered. The size of the move within a text or discourse has not been clarified in the definition above. Hiranburana (2000) has dealt successfully with that problem defining a move as "the smallest functional free unit or element of discourse and schematic structure." In addition to the functional side of the move the size being 'the smallest unit' is also recognized

here. Some further clarification to the move is offered by shedding some more light on the move realization. Hiranburana (ibid.) points out that a move "can be realized by steps or stages and options to achieve the overall functional goal of each genre." The step is further elaborated on by Hiranburana (ibid.) by stating that it is "a means or act, sometimes sequential sometimes optional, used to achieve the move and it is manifested or embodied by linguistic realizations or exponents." Some additional point is to be added here about the move concerning optionality and obligatoriness. Some moves are obligatory whereas some other ones can be optional. Hiranburana (ibid.) defined obligatory moves as those which "can be identified by their presence in the schematic structure or patterns of expectancy, and they define the types of genre."

Analyzing Academic Genres:

The starting point of GA is academic writing where Swales tries to figure out some of the different stages, later on called moves and steps, deciding the structure of a given text type. This new branch of discourse analysis i.e., GA has witnessed rapid expansion. Several genres have been analyzed by applying the same approach adopted by Swales .i.e., the move-based approach to investigate the schemata of those genres. In the genre of academic writing, Swales (1990) studied academic article introductions.

Swales model (1990) is presented below and followed by similar ones concerning other genres within the academic writing.

1-Article Introduction Genre (Swale's model (1990)):

Swales proposed a three move model with their obligatory and / or optional steps. It is called then the CARS 'Create A Research Space' model. This model is illustrated below:

Move 1 Establishing a territory

- Step 1 Claiming centrality and /or
- Step 2 Making topic generalization(s) and /or
- Step 3 Reviewing items of previous research

Move 2 Establishing a niche

- Step 1A Counter-claiming or
- Step 1B Indicating a gap or
- Step 1C Question-raising or
- Step 1D Continuing a tradition

Move 3 Occupying the niche

- Step1A Outlining purposes or
- Step 1B Announcing present research
- Step 2 Announcing principal findings
- Step 3 Indicating article structure

2-Lab Report:

Bhatia (1993:94) states that the genre of lab report has its own structure put in moves as follows:

- Move one: stating aim of the experiment
- Move two: establishing field
- Move three: explaining theory

Another academic genre investigated by Bhatia, as quoted in Bhatia (ibid.97) is the Student Dissertation Introduction where the following model represent its structure according to its moves and steps as follows:

3-Student Dissertation Introduction

- Move one: introducing the field
- Move two: introducing the general topic (within the field)
- Move three: introducing the particular topic (within the general topic)
- Move four: defining the scope of the particular topic by
 - 4.1: introducing research parameters
 - 4.2: summarizing previous research
- Move five: preparing for present research by
 - 5.1: indicating a gap in previous research
 - 5.2: indicating a possible extension of previous research
- Move six: introducing present research by
 - 6.1: stating the aim of the research
 - Or
 - 6.2: describing briefly the work carried out
 - 6.3: justifying the research

Additionally, as indicated in Connor (1996:134), Najjar (1990) analyzed article introductions in Arabic in agricultural sciences whereas John (1993) examined experiment-based disciplines such as biology. Brett (1994) considered the results section of sociology articles , as referred to in Jordan (1997) while Ismat (2003) investigated book review. The analysis of journal research article genre was also made by Prince (2008).

Analyzing Professional Genres:

Genres of professional writing have also been focused on by some linguists. Bhatia (1993) studied job applications, promotion letters as well as legal discourse. Later on, some other studies shedding light on various genres have been studied, as indicated in Bhatia (2002).They are as follows: fund raising discourse by Bhatia (1998a), academic job and course advertisement by Faircolough (1993).Connor (2004) stated that sales letters and business request letters were examined by Zhu (1997) and Komg (1989) respectively in addition to letters of recommendation which were studied by Precht (2000). Hiranburana (2000) shed some light on the generic structure of business correspondence whereas Clynes and Henry (2004) dealt with Malay Wedding. Genre analysis has also been made in the application essays to medical and dental schools by Ding (2007).

Below, there are some illustrative examples illustrating analyzing professional genres according to genre-based way.

1- Standard Bank Letter:

Move one: Establishing credentials

Move two: Introducing the offer

2.1: Offering the product or service

2.2: Essential detailing of the offer

2.3: Indicating value of the offer

Move three: Offering incentives

Move four: Enclosing documents

Move five: Soliciting response

Move six: pressure tactics

Move seven: Ending politely

2-Job Application Letter :

Move one: Establishing credentials

Move two: Introducing candidature

2.1: Offering the candidature

2.2: Essential detailing of the candidature

2.3: Indicating value of the candidature

Move three: Offering incentives

Move four: Enclosing documents

Move five: Soliciting response

Move six: Using pressure tactics

Move seven: Ending politely

3-Legal Cases:

Move one: Identifying the case

Move two: Establishing facts of the case

Move three: Arguing the case

3.1: Giving a history of the case

3.2: Presenting arguments

3.3: Deriving ratio decidendi

Move four Pronouncing judgment

Conclusion:

Conducting researches in the fields mentioned above in Iraq and applying GA to Iraqi samples would make a new contribution since academic as well as professional settings have not been studied extensively. Applying GA principles to academic genre and its sub-genres is of a high importance since it could be of a serious help in writing promotion papers, MA theses, Phd dissertations, etc. Every single academic field could be put under study to investigate its structure through inducting its obligatory and optional moves and steps. These academic fields are chemistry, physics, medicine, dentistry, etc. The

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samples written by Arab non-native speakers of English could be compared and contrasted to their counterpart written by native speakers of English. Conducting such kinds of research investigates discourse staging leading to raising the standard of the Arab non-native speakers of English in writing. In the professional fields: the studies mentioned above could be done by limiting them to writing limited to CA, for example, the genre of the wedding invitation cards. Researches in the field of GA could focus on the writings of non professional writers like university students or professional writers like newspaper editors. These researches could be done within the same culture or cross-culturally. GA could be even expanded to include new fields other than academic writing or professional settings. Literary genre and its sub-genres like short stories, novels, plays etc. could be investigated according to the genre-based approach. Other genres could also be the subject matter of this kind of analysis like political genres and religious ones.

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