

GENRE ANALYSIS IN THE FRAME OF SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS

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ABSTRACT

Systemic Functional Linguistics is a linguistics approach which cop-siders not only the structure of the language but also its social context. In the Systemic Functional Linguistics the concept of genre is defined as a step-by-step activity to reach a goal. The concept of genre is used to describe the cultural context in a language. According to this view, text should be seen and observed in its interaction with the context and social background. For that, the genre analysis will constantly involve the linguistic social context in the forms of field, tenor, mode, schematic structure and its realization in the text.

Key Words: genre analysis, schematic structure, situational context, linguistics

ABSTRAK

Linguistik Sistemik Fungsional adalah pendekatan linguistik yang tidak hanya mempertimbangkan struktur bahasa, tetapi juga konteks sosial bahasa tersebut. Dalam Linguistik Sistemik Fungsional, konsep genre didefinisikan sebagai sebuah aktifitas yang bertahap untuk mencapai suatu tujuan. Konsep genre digunakan untuk menggambarkan pengaruh konteks budaya dalam bahasa. Dalam pandangan ini, teks harus dilihat dan dimaknai dalam interaksinya dengan konteks dan latar belakang sosialnya. Untuk itu, analisis genre akan selalu melibatkan konteks situasi berbahasa yang berupa tema pembicaraan (field), hubungan antar pembicara (tenor), wahana/sarana pembicaraan (mode), struktur skematik, dan realisasinya di dalam teks.

Kata Kunci: analisis genre, struktur skematik, konteks situasional, linguistik

BACKGROUND

Genre is an intuitively attractive concept that helps to organize the common-sense labels we use to categorize texts and the situations in which they occur. The concept of genre is based on the idea that members of a community usually have little difficulty in recognizing similarities in the texts they use frequently and are able to draw on their repeated experiences

with such texts to read, understand, and perhaps write them relatively easily.

The term genre is not new. It can be traced back to the study of classical rhetoric and literature. Modern conception of genre, however, extends its use beyond literary texts, into films, music, and everyday forms of speech and writing. Today, studies of genre also stress a concern with context as well as form and

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emphasize the importance of description and analysis rather than simple classification.

Genre has confirmed much of its potential as one of the most lively and influential concepts in second language teaching and research. Essentially, genres are resources for getting things done using language. Recognizing their importance, few teachers now neglect text structure or the importance of context in teaching process in many second language classrooms.

It is also true that genre has become a key concept in modern thought, not only in linguistics and language teaching but in many areas of contemporary social and cultural studies. This is because language is seen as a central way in which we construct our lives. It is through genres that individuals develop relationships, establish communities, and achieve their goals.

This article attempts to investigate the concept of genre analysis in Systemic Functional Linguistics tradition. The discussion is presented as followings; the first section will describe the theory of Systemic Functional Linguistics in general, the second section will investigate the concept of Genre analysis in general. The third section discusses genre analysis in the Systemic Functional Linguistics' view. The discussion will be closed by a conclusion.

Systemic Functional Linguistics

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is a linguistic approach in studying language, which considers how language accomplishes its tasks through various choices. In contrast with formal tradition, SFL is not only considering linguistic structures, but also the social context within which language takes place. One of the features which makes SFL unique is its view of language as social semiotics. In this section, a general description of Systemic Functional model of language will be discussed further.

Language as social semiotic

SFL views language as social semiotic. According to Halliday, semiotics is the study of

meaning in its most general sense. Language is viewed as the one among a number of systems of meaning that, taken all together, constitute human culture (Halliday, 1985:4)

Meanings are always exchanged in interactions between people and the socio-cultural groups they represent. SFL is concerned not only with language as a system, but also with language as a social behavior. It is through language that each individual establishes, develops and maintains a social relationship. From a social perspective, language as social semiotic system can only be understood in its socio-historical context. (Halliday, 1978:4). Within the SFL system, a series of choices in language are referred to as a text (it can be written or spoken). In line with its social semiotic orientation, SFL defines text as "a social exchange of meanings" (Halliday, 1985:11) and sees its relationship with the language system as a dynamic one.

SFL also sees text as the instantiation of the language system in social context. Instantiation is the process whereby many options from the language are actualized in a given social context. Halliday (2002: 359) describes the interaction between language system and language use by comparing to that between the climate and the weather:

"The climate and the weather are not different phenomena. [...] they are the same phenomenon as seen by different observers. The system [climate] is the pattern formed by the instances [weather]; and each instance represents an exchange with the environment".

Being the link between social context and the language system, a text must be defined by reference to both:

"A text is the product of its environment and it functions in that environment [and] the process of continuous movement through the system, a process which both expresses the higher orders of meaning that constitute the 'social semiotic', the meaning system of the culture, and at the same time changes and modifies the system itself." (Halliday, 1978:136-137)

Context in SFL

In SFL, social context is construed as meaning potential and is modeled as a semiotic system. The relation between language and context is conceptualized as one of realizations, or meta-redundancies, where "the social context comprises patterns of language patterns" (Martin, 1997:4). Realization also entails that language construes, is construed by and (over time) reconstrues social context (Martin, 1997:4)

SFL recognizes two models of social context: Halliday's single-stratum model and Martin's two-stratum model. In addition to Halliday's context of situation stratum, Martin introduces context of culture as a higher stratum, and models both as dynamic open semiotic systems through the concept of semogenesis. The scale of semogenesis is used in SFL to model changes in meaning potential (both language and context) over time. Martin (1997) also uses semogenesis to explain the relationship between language and ideology dynamically.

Adopting Malinowski's view, the SFL approach emphasizes that the meaning of a particular communicative event should be grounded in the context of culture and context of situation. The context of culture is represented by genre, while the context of situation is represented by register. The relation between text and context is two-way. Context determines what is relevant to the text, and text constructs the significant variables of context.

The context of culture is mediated by a more immediate and concrete context of situation through the realization of register. Influenced by Malinowsky and Firth, Halliday introduced the notion of context of situation with its three variables, namely field, tenor and mode. Mode simply refers to the interactive role that the text plays. At its most basic level, mode includes written and spoken texts (visual versus aural). Tenor describes the role of the participants, which includes power differentiation, frequency of contact, and level of affective involvement.

Field concerns the area with which the language is dealing, including the content of the message itself.

Language as a tri-stratal system

SFL models language as a system of three strata, organized into two planes. Following Hjelmslev (1963), the two planes are called expression and content. The content is stratified into lexico-grammar (or grammar) and discourse-semantics (or semantics). The term for expression stratum is 'sounding' (for phonology), wording (for lexico-grammar), and meaning (for discourse semantics). The three strata are represented in figure below.

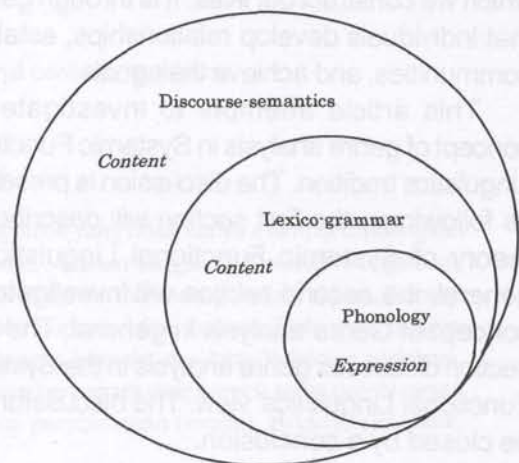


Figure 1. Language as a tri-stratal system (Based on Hjelmslev, 1963)

The circles show that all three levels have the same fundamental principles of organization: each level is a network of interrelated options, either in meaning, wording or sounding, which are realized as structures, based on the principle of rank.

SFL construes the relation between strata as one of realizations. The discourse semantic level is realized by lexico-grammatical level, and lexico-grammatical level is realized by the expression level. A unit of analysis of discourse semantics is the text, which typically consists of clauses as the unit of analysis in lexico-grammar.

Clause consists of syllables which is the unit of analysis in the phonological level.

SFL is a theory of meaning making, and so its central focus is on semantics. The aim of studying SFL is to explain the meaning they realize in texts. However, the meanings exchanged in a text cannot be explained without attending to the ways in which they are realized in wording and phonology/graphology. Thus, expression is always related to meaning, and vice versa.

Metafunctions

A distinguishing feature of SFL is its metafunction, which is a development of Firth's interpretation of meaning as function in social context. The meaning of metafunction is used to convey the idea that each is built into the organization of language as a system. According to Halliday (1976:29), language has evolved as a system organized around three general semantic motifs:

"Whatever we are using language for, we need to make some reference to the categories of our experience; we need to take on some role in interpersonal relation; and we need to embody these in the form of text".

SFL recognizes three general social functions (metafunctions) that we use language for: ideational, interpersonal and textual. The ideational metafunction provides resources for construing and reflecting on our experience of the world around and inside us. The ideational metafunction has two components: experiential and logical. The first construes experiences as configurations of elements each of which has a special and distinct significance with respect to the whole. Logical meaning relates patterns of experience in terms of two general semantic relations: projection and expansion.

Interpersonal metafunction is about our participation, as speakers in the speech situation: the roles we take on ourselves and impose on others; our wishes, feelings, attitudes and judgments (Halliday, 1978). People participate

in the speech situation by giving or demanding either information or goods and services. They also express opinions about the subject matter, themselves, second and third parties, which can range from positive to negative polarity. These opinions can be about degrees of probability, subjectivity, and so forth.

The textual metafunction is responsible for creating cohesion in texts, and establishing continuity in time and space. The textual metafunction enables the integration of the other two types of meaning (ideational and interpersonal) in texts. As a result, a text acquires the quality that makes it recognizable as a text (texture), which is a product of the interaction between cohesion and coherence.

These three metafunctions are interconnected with each other, so that we can achieve all three social metafunctions simultaneously. Choices within each of these three semantic categories are further described through choices within three categories at the lexicogrammatical level. For example, theme, coherence, cohesion, ellipsis, reference, substitution, and conjunction are all provided through textual meaning. Clause structure, including hypotactic and paratactic clauses, relates to ideational meaning. Mood, modality and verbal processes relate to interpersonal meaning.

Parallel to this configuration, one basic assumption of SFL is also that each of the contextual factors (field, tenor, and mode) primarily determines choices in the ideational, textual, and interpersonal metafunctions respectively. Halliday (1978: 116-117) suggests,

"The type of symbolic activity (field) tends to determine the range of meaning as content, language in the observer function (ideational); the role relationships (tenor) tend to determine the range of meaning as participation, language in the intruder function (interpersonal); and the rhetorical channel (mode) tends to determine the range of meaning as texture, language in its relevance to the environment (textual)."

Genre analysis

The notion of genre has been discussed for a long time in a range of different areas, such as literature, sociology, folklore studies, linguistic anthropology, ethnography of speaking, conversation analysis, rhetoric, literary theory, and linguistics. Genres are identified in relation to a number of aspects, including categories, functions, contexts and structures. Different approaches emphasize different aspects, which may overlap or be quite different from each other.

Genres are, first of all, associated with categorization of texts as either ideal types or actual forms (Swales, 1990:34). As ideal types, genres are seen as a classificatory category, for categorizing individual texts into various groups, for example, secular or religious genres, literary genres, popular genres, educational genres.

Secondly, genres are also identified according to their functions and each disciplinary approach highlights different functions. In the ethnography of speaking, genres, which coincide with the notion of 'speech events', function to provide models for ways of speaking in speech communities. Identification of genres includes linguistic varieties within the community, which are categorized according to types of events, topics, purposes, setting and participants, message form and content and ordering of speech acts within the event (Paltridge, 1997:13).

In the SFL approach, as Martin suggests, genre is seen as a goal-oriented social activity. The SFL approach emphasizes the hierarchical relation between language and culture and considers genre to be representation of the context of culture, which is the most abstract in the hierarchy. This context of culture determines the context of situation, which is represented by register, which in turn determines the schematic or organizational structure of the text.

The third aspect of genre is the role of context in the construction and interpretation of genre, the description of which varies from one approach to another. In the ethnography

of speaking context seems to include the immediate setting of a speech event, which is one of the elements in his framework of a speech event. Later, based on his framework, the notion of context is expanded to examine intercultural and inter-ethnic communication, which plays an important role in identifying patterns of language use across cultures (see, for example, Gumperz, 1982).

The last aspect of genres, which varies among different approaches, is the generic structure. In the ethnography of speaking and conversational analysis, generic structure is described in the structure of turn taking, topic initiation and development, feedback and conversational openings and closings.

The relation between genre and schematic structure in the SFL approach is more systematically and explicitly described. This approach has its foundations in the work of Halliday in the early 70s, and is further developed in the 80s in the works of Halliday (1985/1990), Halliday and Hasan, (1989), Martin (1989, 1992).

In SFL views, the term of generic analysis is referred to the way of identifying the text in which it is similar to other texts of its genre. The generic identity of a text lies in three dimensions; its register configuration, its schematic structure, and the realizational patterns in the text.

Generic Structure Potential (GSP)

Hasan (1985) states that genre is the verbal expression of the context of culture. Genre in SFL is defined as "a staged, goal-oriented purposeful activity". The definition implies that genre describes the influence of the context of culture on language because genre relates to culturally-specific purposes. Genre is identified by its social purposes, which give meaning to the social activities being described. These different purposes impact on differences in the stages of the activities employed to fulfill those purposes. The stages of description imply structure, into which text is

organized. The reason that genres have stages is simply that we usually cannot make all the meanings we want to at once. The stages are crucial for explaining the organization of text, since it is necessary to describe the steps of how people achieve their goals.

However, the context of culture (genre) is an abstract and general concept and cannot be directly identified in the language. Its realization (or encoding) in the language is mediated in two ways: firstly, the mediation is realized by specifying a common staging organization, or schematic structure. Secondly, it is mediated by the second level of context, namely register, through specifying the genre potential of a particular culture in terms of the possible configurations of register variables allowed within a given culture at a given time (Eggins, 1994:35).

In describing the schematic structure, two concepts are fundamental: constituency and labelling. Constituency refers to a part/whole relationship between elements of some structure (Eggins, 1994:37). Constituents are identified using functional labelling according to the function of different constituents. Constituents of a schematic structure are said to be either obligatory, optional or recursive. A genre is defined according to the obligatory elements of schematic structure. Patterns of schematic structure will differ across genres, depending on what activities are considered purposeful in those particular cultures. Texts belonging to the same genre perform the same stages of organisation, or schematic structure.

Hasan (1985) proposes a model of 'Generic Structure Potential (GSP)' to encapsulate the commonality and variation of schematic structures between texts of the same genre. The stages of a genre of buying and selling, for example, consists of stages, such as Greeting, Sale Initiation, Sale Enquiry or Sale Request, Sale Compliance, Sale Purchase and Purchase Closure. The activity may begin with either one of the first four stages and the order may be changed, whereas the last three stages are a

fixed sequence (Halliday and Hasan, 1985:64). In other cultures, however, bargaining may be a meaningful stage in a selling and buying activity.

Therefore, the GSP of the genre "Service Encounter" of a "Shop Transaction" is formulated as follows.

[(G).(SI)^][(SE.){SR^SC^}^S^]P^PC(^F)

It is suggested that any shop transaction in English potentially consists of the following macro-structural elements: Greeting (G), Sale Initiation (SI), Sale Enquiry (SE), Sale Request (SR), Sale Compliance (SC), Sale (S), Purchase (P), Purchase Closure (PC), and Finis (F). The round brackets in the above GSP indicate optionality of enclosed elements. Therefore, G, SI, SE, and F are optional and SR, SC, S, P, and PC are obligatory. The dot between elements means 'more than one' option in sequence. The arrow shows iteration. The braces with a curved arrow indicate that the degree of iteration for elements in the square brackets is equal. That is to say, if SR occurs twice, then SC must also occur twice. Finally, the caret sign (^) shows sequence.

In mediating genre, according to Halliday (1978), register describes three elements of the context of situation: Field, Tenor and Mode. Field refers to the situational variable that deals with the focus of the activity. It is the topic of the situation, and is realised through the transitivity system in language, i.e. through the patterns of Processes (verbs), Participants (nouns), and Circumstances (prepositional phrases or time, manner, place and so on). The topic of situation in the Field can be divided into technical (specialized) situation and commonsense (everyday) situation (Eggins, 1994:107). Technical situation is characterized by a knowledge of an institution/area, deep taxonomies, and a detailed sub-classification. Everyday situation is characterized by a common knowledge, shallow taxonomies, and a limited sub-classification (Eggins, 1994:109).

Tenor refers to the social roles played by the interactants. According to Poynton (1985),

Tenor can be divided into three different but simultaneous continua of power, affective involvement and contact. In terms of power, the social roles may be of equal or unequal power. In terms of affective involvement, the social roles are either high or low. In terms of contact, the social roles are either of frequent or occasional contact. Tenor is realized through the grammatical use of the Mood system, i.e. through the following factors; the types of clause structure (declarative, interrogative), the degree of certainty and obligation expressed (modality), the use of tags, vocatives, attitudinal words which are either positively or negatively loaded, expression of intensification, and politeness markers of various kinds (Egins, 1994:77).

Mode refers to the role of language in an interaction. According to Martin (1984), this role consists of two types of distance connecting language and situation: First, it refers to spatial/ interpersonal distance. This refers to a continuum, which distinguishes situations according to the possibilities of immediate feedback between the interactants: from face-to-face conversational situation with immediate feedback, to the situation of writing where there is no audio-visual contact between writer and reader. Secondly, it refers to experiential distance, which distinguishes situations according to the distance between language and the social process that is occurring. This situation ranges from language accompanying the social process, where the language is an action itself, such as in a game, to language used to construct the social process, and in the language of a novel, where language is used to reflect on the experience.

The implications of the Mode variable of context of situation to language use are twofolds. First, Mode differences distinguish the different organisation of spoken and written situations. Written language is organized synoptically because it is intended to encode our reflections on a topic. This means that its structure has to be presented as a completed whole, and the text has to show the beginning,

middle and end type of generic structure. Spoken language is presented dynamically, as an unfolding process. Secondly, mode variation also affects the degree of grammatical complexity and lexical density of the language chosen. The more spoken text has a higher grammatical complexity, but the more written text has a higher lexical density.

CONCLUSION

In SFL tradition, the concept of genre is used to describe the impact of the context of culture on language, by exploring the staged, step-by-step structure cultures institutionalize as ways of achieving goals. Therefore, SFL has stressed the importance of the social purposes of genres and of describing the rhetorical structures that have evolved to serve these purposes.

The relationship of texts and contexts is central to this framework as interactions can only be understood by seeing them against their social setting. Therefore, genre analysis of a text in SFL, involves its situational contexts (field, tenor and mode), its schematic structure, and the realizational patterns in the text.

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