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Genre analysis and reading of English as a foreign language: Genre schemata beyond text typologies

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Abstract

In schema theoretical views of reading comprehension a distinction has been established between linguistic, conceptual, and formal schemata. Formal schemata have been understood as the (partial) knowledge the learner has about, mainly, the written texts' structure. Research of various kinds has proven that comprehension is favored by if the learner uses this knowledge, when enhanced through explicit instruction. Many of the studies done consist mainly in comparing readers' behavior towards different text typologies or in comparing the reaction toward different text structures by readers from different linguistic backgrounds. This paper seeks to show the need to include the notion of genre in schema research, and more specifically in research on formal schemata. The notion of genre or rhetoric schemata brings up a pragmatic dimension, and incorporates a consideration of the sociocultural conventions for the assessment of reading comprehension. A distinction is made between textual and generic typology; the distinction is illustrated through the comparison of two related genres; the book review and the book printed advertisement, following Paltridge's model for analyzing genres. The comparison shows that the comprehension of textual macrostructure does not necessarily imply comprehension along essential dimensions such as the text's communicative or pragmatic function.

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1. Introduction

Research on reading comprehension during the last decades has focused on two issues: one, the reader's prior knowledge; and two, the notion of the reader as an active subject whose mental background is activated in every act of learning. In top-down reading comprehension models, readers are envisaged as interacting with texts, in that they interpret the text and infer its meaning with the help of their own knowledge, so that every act of reading is different even if the text is the same. These models emphasize the reader's background knowledge, and seem most adequate for describing the reading situation of adult learners of a foreign language.¹

As part of the prior knowledge that the reader possesses, three components have been identified in the literature: thematic or conceptual, linguistic, and formal (Carrell, 1983; Levine and Reves, 1994). A formal schema is usually understood as representing the knowledge that the reader has about the formal characteristics of texts, especially their structuring or sequence (e.g., cause–effect, problem–solution, etc.), and their functions (expository, descriptive, argumentative, etc.). Viewed in this way, the formal component would actually be of a purely linguistic nature, so that it could be included within the second component, although at a suprasentential level. Even so, a problem of text typology arises, since researchers and scholars frequently perceive certain texts as being different, while apparently having the same suprasentential structuring or sequencing, and similar textual functions.

Along with this, the last decade has also seen a renewed interest in the concept of genre on the part of several disciplines connected to language and learning, such as Education, Applied Linguistics, Pragmatics and TEFL. The area of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has had a leading role in stressing the notion of genre analysis as a central task, triggering-specific teaching techniques (Swales, 1990; Bhatia, 1993; Dudley-Evans, 1998). Thus, a crucial task, when approaching texts belonging to different academic genres and professions, is the identification of their communicative purpose within the different discourse communities of use and of the latter's language conventions. As Swales states in his definition of genre (1990: 58):

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 the discourse and influences and constraints 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 expectations are

¹ Other models are bottom-up; these place the emphasis on the decoding of cues, starting at the lowest levels and eventually becoming automated. These models seem to be more applicable to native first readers or to beginning readers in a foreign or second language. Interactive models, on the other hand, allow for a two-directional processing. For a more complete description of different models see, among others, Antonini and Pino (1991).

realized, the exemplar will be viewed as prototypical by the parent discourse community.

Later approaches, influenced by cognitive theories, have continued to stress the importance of the cognitive and sociocultural context for the definition and establishment of genre types (Paltridge, 1994, 1995, 1997; Berkenkotter and Huckin, 1995; Huckin, 1997). The concept of genre allows us to solve the above mentioned problem, viz., how to distinguish textual forms apparently similar, but perceived as different by speakers, by appealing to the contextual dimension involved in a sociocultural perspective, which makes it possible to establish certain parameters differentiating genre types in a more coherent and comprehensive way.

The aim of this paper is to insist on the need of including the notion of genre in schema research, and more specifically in relation to formal schemata. The concept of genre schema implies the consideration of sociocultural conventions that exist around texts or discursal units, and it should be taken into account when measuring the readers' comprehension. We cannot be certain whether or not the readers have grasped the message unless we are aware of their knowledge of the contextual dimensions that constrain it at different levels.

A further aim of this paper is to back up the distinction between genre and text typology already present in other works (Biber, 1988, 1989; Bazerman, 1998; Paltridge, 1996, 2001; Pilegaard and Frandsen, 1996), by showing how the comprehension of the textual macrostructure does not imply the comprehension of such essential dimensions as the text's communicative or pragmatic purpose.

The next section will delve deeper into the notion of genre, especially in relation to text type, and some implications will be drawn with respect to foreign language reading comprehension. Following that, the difference between text type and genre type will be illustrated using two samples, belonging respectively to the genres 'book advertisement' and 'book review' (Tables 1–4). To that purpose, Paltridge's (1995) model is adopted, as it has proved a useful tool for making the distinction between the two concepts. Although the textual arrangement is similar in both sample texts, the analysis and comparison of some generic features unveils differences that can only be explained by considering the conventions adopted in the respective discourse communities using the genres. In contrast, a teaching approach exclusively centered on textual features may lead readers, especially those with a foreign linguistic and cultural background, to interpret cues in a wrong or inaccurate way, something that at worst may lead to a wrong identification of the genre itself. Finally, some implications, both of a theoretical and practical nature, are drawn.

2. Textual typology and generic typology

Meyer's (1975, 1977) taxonomy of rhetorical relations in expository texts has served as a basis for many further studies on reading comprehension. Textual relations were labelled as covariance, question–answer, comparison, collection, and description. According to this author, these relations could be tied to textual representations both at global and at lower

levels, such as the paragraph or the sentence. Thus, texts describing processes would show a predominance of relations of the first kind, while the macrostructure of an experimental report would be predominantly of the second type, and so on. The reader's task would be to construct a cognitive representation of the text similar to the one the author had intended to convey.

Meyer and Grice (1982) define a model of text–reader interaction in which the reader's prior knowledge plays a key role. In this model, the structural strategy is predominant: readers would first seek a global organization scheme linking the author's main thesis to the main propositions (more or less similar to the notion of macrostructure developed in van Dijk and Kintsch, 1978). Then they would search for relations between the main thesis and supporting details. The comprehension process would be a linear one, using textual cues to make guesses about which schemata assign to which text, and reformulating them if the later reading is not compatible with the initial evaluation. This process would also be a top-down one, in which readers construct representations of the text's propositions that are similar to the writer's own, as regards hierarchical structure and content. When recalling a text, readers start from the highest level in the structure and move downwards.

Later studies on foreign language reading comprehension have continued to use Meyer's taxonomy (or similar ones), when dealing with text typologies (Carrell, 1984, 1985; Salager-Meyer, 1991; Lahuerta, 1994; to name but a few). Most of these studies focus on the structure of texts from a functional point of view, leaving aside contextual or pragmatic aspects. As an example, Swales (*ibid.*) mentions Carrell, many of whose studies have centered on the rhetorical structuring of texts from a contrastive point of view, and as a result, suffer from the limitations inherent in that view. For instance, when talking about the role played by intertextuality (i.e., knowledge about other texts which influences the comprehension of a given one) in an interactive model of reading comprehension, Carrell has this to say (1987: 32):

In addition to knowledge of and prior experience with other specific texts, intertextuality includes the effects of prior knowledge of and experience with texts in general, and with different text types or genres. Recent empirical research has shown the powerful effects on both first and second language reading of formal schemata or background knowledge of rhetorical organisation and rhetorical conventions [...]. Prior knowledge of English text types (literary, poetic, scientific, descriptive, narrative, argumentative, problem/solution, comparison, etc.) has been shown to affect second language reading.

The concept of text typology, as expressed in this quotation, embodies different levels of specificity, ranging from rhetorical structures such as argumentation, to such extended stretches of text as scientific discourse. In addition, no distinction whatever is made between the two notions of text type and genre.

Similarly, the label 'rhetoric' is often used in the literature to refer to textual typologies while it does not necessarily comprise discursual or pragmatic ones. There is a need to call upon other dimensions, that will link the characteristics of the text as message having a textual structure, to its social and communicative functions.

Genre analysis, as applied in Swales (1990), Bhatia (1993), and later studies, has incorporated some of the contextual elements proper to the notion of genre, albeit in a rather static way. The main characteristic of Swales' analysis in his (1990) seminal work is the division of the text into phases or 'moves', further subdivided in 'steps'. For instance, in his CARS² model for the analysis of the genre 'introduction to a scientific article', the starting point would be the text's communicative purpose, i.e., that of creating a research space for the new work. Each of the phases or moves includes the specific information, systematically divided into steps, needed to achieve this purpose. Subsequently, the lower level signals (i.e., syntactic and lexical) that are included within the moves and steps, are analyzed.

Bhatia (1993) continues this trend of analyzing genre types as belonging to different professional fields, especially the legal one, in a contribution to discourse analysis that follows a similar pattern:

The notion of genre analysis [...] is a very powerful system of analysis in that it allows a far thicker description of functional varieties of written and spoken language than that offered by any other system of analysis in existing literature. [...] It expands linguistic analysis from linguistic description to explanation taking into account not only socio-cultural but psycholinguistic factors too. (1993: 39)

The main aim of Bhatia's work is to determine the conventional features of selected genres, and explain them on the basis of both the sociocultural and the cognitive aspects characteristic of the respective fields of professional or academic specialization.

From a systemic-functional perspective, genre appears linked to the concepts of *context* – without which no linguistic phenomena can be properly understood – and *register*. Eggins (1994: 9) defines three contextual levels: register (i.e., the immediate context of situation of a given linguistic event), genre, which refers to the cultural context, and ideology, the highest and most abstract contextual level reflected in the various uses of language. She defines genre in the following way:

[A] concept used to describe the impact of the context of culture on language, by exploring the staged, step-by-step structure cultures institutionalise as ways of achieving goals. (Ibid.)

Genre, being more abstract than register, is realized through the latter, as a generic *potential* present in a particular culture. A genre instance would comprise various constituents, of a functional nature, presenting a *schematic structure*—an “organisation sequenced step by step” (Martin, 1985). Each stage of this schematic structure is related to a number of lexical and grammatical features, so that a division line can be established among the steps through a detailed identification of the relevant features. Genre variants are

² CARS stands for Create A Research Space, as moves and steps are arranged through possible different combinations (limited by convention), identifying an area of research that needs developing or refining (“problem”), and the research that has to be done to meet this need (“solution”, in Hoey's terms; see Hoey, 2001).

those texts in which the obligatory elements of the schematic structure, as well as other, optional ones, are realized.

The various approaches focusing on genre in the 1980s and early 1990s have essentially examined the basis for the identification of phases in texts, by developing concepts such as Martin's earlier mentioned *schematic structure* (1985), Hasan's *generic structure potential* (1989), or the notions of *moves and steps*, as used by Swales (1981, 1990), Salager-Meyer (1990), or Bittencourt Dos Santos (1996).

In Biber (1988, 1989), the different textual typologies in the English language are established through a factor analysis applied to a large-scale corpus based study of 23 genres (the texts comprised around one million words). The criteria for the identification of the different text types appear to be mainly of a linguistic nature; for the characterization of genre, however, also external format and usage situations have to be considered. Genres are "defined and distinguished on the basis of systematic non-linguistic criteria, and they are valid in those terms" (Biber, 1989: 39).

Earlier than that, in his *Text Grammar of English*, Werlich (1976) had made a proposal that distinguished text types (description, narration, exposition, argumentation and instruction), from *text forms* and *text form variants*. While *text types* are, according to the author, "idealised norms of distinctive text structuring" (ibid.: 39), the former are "the conventional manifestations of a text type in a natural language" (ibid.: 46, my emphasis). In this view text forms, such as "comments", are the dominant manifestations of a particular text type—in this case, subjective argumentation, while text form variants are "more specific variants", and "are composed in accordance with a conventionally fixed *compositional plan*" (ibid.: 46, author's own emphasis). As examples of text variants Werlich mentions "reviews" and "leading articles".

This distinction, which includes contextual and cotextual criteria for categorizing discourse (or text), in many respects seems to be equivalent to the one proposed by Paltridge (1994) between macrogenres and genres.

Pilegaard and Frandsen (1996) consider the different criteria used in the literature to distinguish genre from text type and to classify the latter. Although they acknowledge there is a "traditional distinction" between the two concepts, one that is based on both text-internal and text-external criteria, they find the distinction "difficult to uphold", as "for all practical purposes both text genres and text types are often classified in terms of both text-internal and text-external parameters" (1996: 3). They seem to prefer the distinction *whole text* and *text parts* to differentiate genre from text type, so that genres would be whole documents, and text types would be classified in similar ways. But again, the literature has examples that contradict this distinction, which is based on a rather superficial difference. Not only are many analyses of the so-called "genre types" performed on whole documents, other analyses focus on parts of documents, such as *introductions to scientific reports* (Swales, 1990; Paltridge, 1995).

Pilegaard and Fransen discuss the different criteria used to identify and classify text types (the cognitive operation involved, the linguistic means used, their communicative function). As regards linguistic criteria, they mention Virtanen's (1992) "two-level model", suggested for text production purposes; here, at a first level, "'discourse function' (purpose of discourse) and 'discourse type' (to narrate, to present arguments, etc.)" are distinguished from the next level's "'text strategy' (planning)

and ‘text type’ (defined as an aggregate of prototypical surface features)” (ibid.: 11). This distinction, which seems to offer many advantages when differentiating prototypical discourse realizations (typically based on certain types of text) from “deviant” ones, is shared by authors like Paltridge (1994, 1995), to separate out genre from text type.³

From a pragmatic angle, Paltridge (1994: 295) advocates the use of cognitive criteria in the categorization of genres:

The search for structural divisions in texts should be seen as a search for cognitive boundaries in terms of convention, appropriacy, and content rather than as a search for linguistically defined boundaries; that is, there are non-linguistic, rather than linguistic, reasons for generic staging in texts. [. . .] What seems clear is that the genre analyst needs to move away from the physical aspects of language and how they reflect reality to how the text, as a whole, is conditioned by external considerations. (author’s own emphasis)

Paltridge’s concept of genre has its theoretical foundation in Fillmore’s *frame semantics*, with its three key concepts of prototype, intertextuality, and inheritance. According to prototype theories, “people categorise items and concepts in keeping with a prototypical image they build in their mind of what it is that represents the item or concept in question” (Paltridge, 1995: 394). As to the first concept, genre should be categorized according to *prototypes* that reflect pragmatic and perceptual aspects in communicative acts. At the same time, the notion of prototype allows for the inclusion in a given genre of cases that are thought of as belonging, but do not seem to conform to the standard, but deviate from it to different degrees. The advantage is that there are no clear-cut barriers between typologies; rather, they form a continuum.

Secondly, Paltridge stresses the need to work with intertextuality (Beaugrande and Dressler, 1981) in order to explain the relationship among genre types in a dynamic way (certain genre types dominate others).

Andn finally, inheritance concerns the transference, or inheritance, of the characteristics of a genre from one instance to another.

Berkenkotter and Huckin (1993, 1995) point to the sociocognitive nature of genres, listing as their main characteristics their

1. *Dynamism*: “they change over time in response to their users’ cognitive needs”;
2. *Situatedness*: “our knowledge of genre is derived from and embedded in our participation in the communicative activities of daily and professional life. As such, genre knowledge is a form of ‘situated cognition’ ”;
3. *Form and content*: “genre knowledge embraces both form and content, including a sense of what content is appropriate to a particular purpose in a particular situation at a particular point in time”;

³ Pilegaard and Fransen actually advocate further research on the nature and classification of text types; they point to prototype-theoretical approaches and to the relations between texts and their cultural contexts as two areas that should be addressed in the future.

4. *Duality of structure*: “we constitute social structures (in professional, institutional and organizational contexts) and simultaneously reproduce these structures” (authors’ own emphasis);
5. *Community ownership*: “genre conventions signal a discourse community’s norms, epistemology, ideology, and social ontology.”
(Berkenkotter and Huckin, 1995: 4)

Huckin (1995/1996) further shows, through an analysis of the existing literature on genre, that more than 20 of the discourse features mentioned in these works as typically generic, are of a cultural kind. He claims that language teaching should be more sensitive to contextual aspects, and should be based on qualitative analyses of texts in their *cultural contexts*. In fact, Berkenkotter and Huckin continue the social constructivist trend started by Miller (1984/1994) in her essay ‘Genre as social action’. From this work, Huckin (ibid.: 68) draws the following definition of genres as

... dynamic rhetoric forms that are developed from actors’ responses to recurrent situations and that serve to stabilise experience and give it coherence and meaning.

Miller (ibid.: 38–39) had already pointed to the implications of her proposal theoretical and educational practices. The classical Greek concept of rhetoric is revived by linking our goals to the language used in achieving those goals:

... As a recurrent, significant action, a genre embodies an aspect of cultural rationality. For the critic, genres can serve both as an index to cultural patterns and as tools for exploring the achievements of particular speakers and writers; for the student, genres serve as the key to participate in the actions of a community.

The importance of social convention as a determinant factor in establishing genre typologies is also stressed by Bazerman (1998, 2000). He argues: “Genre exists only in the recognition and deployment of typicality by writers and readers—it is the recognisable shape by which participation is enacted and understood” (Bazerman, 1998: 24).

The *social convention* and *communicative goal* criteria are also adopted within the area of translation studies to define genre and distinguish it from text type, which is considered a more basic kind of rhetorical expression (Paltridge, 2001: 77).

It is not difficult to find the reason why genres have become so central in LSP research and practice. In this area, language has been systematically linked to the context of usage, either academic or professional (Widdowson, 1983, 1998). This tendency has been strengthened in the last decades by the general tendency in linguistics to consider language as discourse, by focusing on discourse practices in, and related to, their contexts (Swales, 2001).

Linking academic community practices to specific genres in language education has become a goal in the New Rhetoric Approach (Freedman and Medway, 1994; Johns, 2001), and in curricular design. The Sydney School has promoted the teaching of genres in

Australian primary and secondary schools across the curriculum, as well as in adult second language literacy programs (Johns, 2001).

Paltridge (1996, 2001) advocates a systematic differentiation between genre and text type in language learning classrooms, as the perspectives based on both terms are different but complement each other. This distinction seems particularly needed in the case of foreign language reading comprehension instruction, as will be argued next.

3. Genre analysis and foreign language reading comprehension

Paltridge (1995, 1997) stresses the need for a model of genre analysis that relates both social and cognitive aspects to language comprehension and production. A frame for genre analysis is proposed, which attempts to explain not only the features of texts that are considered as typical samples of given genre, but also of other texts, intuitively considered as typical (for instance, reports in the journal *Nature*, which appear as ‘letters to the editor’):

The framework for genre analysis to be proposed here, then, aims to explain not only how people deal with typical instances of a genre, but also how they assign texts to genres in the absence of those features which are found, on analysis, to be present in most instances which are intuitively seen as typical. (ibid.: 397, author’s emphasis)

In describing his model, Paltridge includes some further aspects from Fillmore’s work, such as the centrality of the notion of prototype; the relationship between genre, concepts, and situations; the components of the interactional frame: sender, receiver, message form, channel, code, topic, setting, props, and communicative function; and the components of the cognitive/conceptual frame: scenarios and roles. Additional components are included, complementing Fillmore’s model, such as the identification of sub-events within the cognitive/conceptual frame, such as macrostructure, *discourse elements and relations*, *discourse element components and semantic relations* and *institutional understandings*—“the supported frameworks of common knowledge, experience, expectations, attitudes and beliefs [...] that are shared by members of the particular discourse community” (ibid.: 397–399). Examples of these are discourse community protocols, ideologies, shared agreements, and the roles played by relationships such as power and status.

Paltridge illustrates the model through the analysis of the genre (within the experimental research paradigm) *introduction to scientific research report*, and stresses that both the text’s *setting* (a scientific journal, using conventional language) and the communicative event’s felicity *conditions*, are mainly of a non-linguistic nature.

As for the remaining elements of the analysis, what appears to be most interesting is the lack of recurrent lexical elements or lexico-grammatical features in the texts chosen as typical instances of this genre: “They [the lexico-grammatical features] are, thus, the feature of the texts which is *least* closely tied to the particular genre and do not form part of other conditions for the assignment of a text to a particular generic category” (ibid.: 401).

Paltridge points to the need of a more precise identification of prototypical aspects in genres, and of establishing clear differences among genres. With respect to discursive structuring, a flexible classification of genres is suggested, based on the interactive presence of various aspects, corresponding to different discursive levels. The assignment of texts to particular genre types would be ultimately based on pragmatic and perceptual criteria:

. . . what typifies a genre at the discourse level is not dependent on the presence of any one particular aspect of discourse structure in isolation, but on the *interaction* and *co-occurrence* of a number of aspects of discourse structure: that is, those of macrostructure, discourse elements and discourse relations, components of discourse elements and semantic relations. This perspective incorporates the position that, even with the constraints specified by each of these particular aspects of discourse organization, there is still a vast range of language choices for the encoding of texts. It is, therefore, simply not possible to predetermine *exactly* what these language choices will be [. . .] Genre assignment, further, in the case of typical instances of a genre, happens on the basis of both pragmatic and perceptual conditions of ‘sufficient similarity’. In the case of untypical, or *fuzzy-edged*, examples of the genre, it is argued, it is not on the basis of *pragmatic* conditions alone that genre membership is assigned. (ibid.: 403, author’s emphasis)

In the general area of TEFL, the approaches based on genre have not been a common practice, and the topic of genre itself seems to be controversial. However, there have been earlier attempts to classify texts for reading purposes by appealing to a certain pragmatic or communicative bias; compare the work by [Baten and Cornu \(1984\)](#), who suggested a classification of texts according to their functional properties. Likewise, both in the teaching of English as a mother tongue and in TEFL, experimental research has considered the influence of genre – although it was not always called that – on text processing and comprehension.

In [Keller-Cohen \(1986\)](#), for instance, various aspects that may influence the comprehension of two specific genre types – bank accounts and periodical bills – are analyzed from the perspective of English as a mother tongue. By altering these documents (basically simplifying them with respect to both format and language), it is shown how prior knowledge, familiarity with content and language, and reading purpose may influence the comprehension of these genres. Especially, the purpose of the reading seems to determine which type of reading – ‘for learning’ or ‘for doing’ – is being used and how much information simply is *not* read. Similarly, the users’ prior knowledge seems to influence the identification of the textual structure by allowing them to anticipate the kind of information each document is likely to contain. It also influences format preference: “readers’ knowledge of the traditional design of [technical information] is negatively transferred and therefore inhibits their ability to effectively utilise a redesigned document” ([Keller-Cohen, 1986: 61](#)). Already in this early work it becomes clear to what extent non-linguistic factors, such as document design, help readers identify processing a document’s content.

[Bernhardt \(1991\)](#) examines textual and conceptual factors that may influence the reading comprehension of genre. The genre studied in this case is a business letter, and the subjects were English adult learners of German as a foreign language. In this study all

factors appear to influence reading comprehension equally. Nevertheless, the author claims for a consideration of formal prior knowledge and cross-cultural differences: “since so little is known about text patterns across *cultures*, a real understanding of the impact of different texts within these different subject groups is equally opaque” (ibid.: 38). It is the conventional character given by a specific culture or field what adds sense to textual structure, at least in terms of communicative or informational value. This textual structure can actually be the same for very different genres, or be different for the same genre, depending on the language used, and even on the discourse community that uses it.

The area of ESP is the one where genre analysis seems to have been taken most seriously, with the above-mentioned leading works by Swales and Bhatia, although the stress was traditionally placed on writing skills. Nevertheless, also within this area, the work by Salager-Meyer (1991) offers interesting results, similar to those in Keller-Cohen for the mother tongue, about genre and ESL reading comprehension. In this study, among other things, three scientific abstracts from Medicine were manipulated in their rhetorical structure, so that three versions were offered: a conventional one, of a single paragraph abstract, with no differentiation of the informative moves; a simplified, structured version, which apparently should be clearer.⁴ The third one was a structurally deficient version (the ‘deficiency’ consisted on altering the order of the elements or moves). The content was the same for all the three versions.

Familiarity with text (or genre, in our own words) had a significant influence on the results. The author concludes: “Their knowledge of previous texts may have led them to sufficient recognition of informational arrangements and rhetorical structure so as to enable them to invoke the *formal schemata characteristic of the abstract genre*” (ibid.: 659, my emphasis). One of the reasons why the abstract structuring, which should add clarity, did not help comprehension, can be that this use is not so common, or ‘*standardised by use*’ in the discourse community, so it did not respond to the generic prototype to which subjects were used. Salager-Meyer (ibid.: 660) finds a need of examining actual genre types in ESP, within a discourse analysis frame:

...there may be some pedagogical value in sensitising students to rhetorical effects and to rhetorical structures that recur in genre-specific texts, to activate and develop formal schemata, to have learners schematise and/or criticise different textual structures and provide prototypical examples of scientific rhetoric. It is very likely that consciousness-raising about text-structure will turn out to be in the near future an important ingredient in ESP courses, not only for reading but also for writing purposes.

Although the author refers nearly always to texts’ structuring, in fact her approach is more global, as it focuses on generic conventions, at a discourse level—the ordering of information units or ‘moves’ appears linked to discourse conventions which go further than

⁴ The author used the ‘structured abstract’ design, which involves the physical splitting up of the different moves (*purpose, methodology, results and conclusions*), according to the guidelines in several biomedical journals, which suggest that these different information units are differentiated by means of headlines, and by using typographical features such as italics or underlining, and a controlled vocabulary.

the purely linguistic ones. It is this stressing of ‘the conventionally established’, versus ‘formally acceptable’, that makes the difference and gives sense to an idea of genre as the discourse unit within a pragmatic or communicative frame.

From the different works examined a distinction can be established, which has to do with the consideration of criteria external to the text itself, between *text type* and *genre type*. While the former refers to the global structuring of the text as regards internal links and development of paragraphs, as in the case of Meyer’s taxonomies, the latter, as could be observed from different approaches, is related both to purely textual conventions and to contextual ones. It can be inferred that if the use of linguistic devices at every level is linked to sociocultural and pragmatic conventions, which characterise a given genre, the comprehension of content, should imply the knowledge and recognition of these contextual parameters. The next section further supports this need by comparing two related but different genres, and showing how differences lay more on generic than on textual dimensions per se.

4. Applying Paltridge’s model of genre analysis to the genre types ‘book advertisement’ and ‘review’

In order to illustrate the difference between text type and genre type, two genres with a similar textual structure, at least in the Information Science field,⁵ were selected. This similarity was checked by examining a number of texts belonging to both genres in different periodical publications existing in the library, mainly in the area of Library and Information Science. The publications examined ranged from more scientific (*The Library Quarterly*, *The Electronic Library*...) to more popular ones (*Information World*, *Library Journal*...). Two texts, which seemed to represent each genre with regards both typographical and textual features, were selected as samples (Appendix A). For each text an analysis was done to obtain its idea units, as well as the macrostructure showing the main idea units and the links among them (see Tables 1 and 2). The text’s configuration as shown in their macrostructure can be matched to a specific text type from the ones listed in Meyer’s works. As can be seen in the outlines resulting from getting the texts’ macrostructure, both samples show a very similar structuring, which correspond basically to description-evaluation.

Besides establishing the textual configurations, the generic dimensions were sought for each genre, following Paltridge’s model for introductions to scientific articles (see Tables 3 and 4). If we consider the two dimensions in the model proposed – interactional frame and cognitive-conceptual frame – the following comparisons between the two genres can be made:

- With respect to the *conceptual paradigm*, both genre types share an informational bias; however, while in the case of the book advert there is a

⁵ It has been observed from personal experience that there is some variation in genre conventions across disciplines: thus, in literature and linguistics journal reviews seem to have a wider length than those encountered in Information Science journals, although this needs to be further studied.

Table 1
Outline and macrostructure of book advertisement prototype (based on ideational units)

Genre structure for book advertisement	Summary protocol (macrostructure)
General presentation	
Book	Cookbook (PL)
Author	Stoltzfus (AUTHORL)
Content description	1. Collection of family recipes from Lancaster County (CONTENT1) 2. Collection of essays about Lancaster villages and city (CONTENT2)
Evaluation	
Positive aspects	1. Easy to prepare (1) and pleasant to the palate (2) recipes (EVALUAT 1 and 2)
Usefulness for/and potential readership/attracting potential readers' attention	2. A treasure (USEFULN) 3. For people everywhere (USERS)

predominance of commercial promotion, in the case of the scientific review the research paradigm is also present.

- Regarding the *interactional frame*, while the potential readers of these two genres could coincide, the sender is clearly different in each case. In the first case it is a publisher, with clearly commercial intentions, while in the second case it is someone linked somehow to the work's discipline or subject area and to the scientific or to the academic world. The message characteristics are similar, and the same can be said of topic and setting, which are similar as well: both the book advert and the book review describe – more or less deeply – and evaluate a recent work, and normally appear in periodical publications of scientific and specialized character. But

Table 2
Outline and macrostructure of book review prototype (based on ideational units)

Genre structure for book review	Summary protocol (macrostructure)
General presentation: Author (in heading), book	The book is an introduction to the world of postcards in libraries (PRESENT)
Content description	1. Editor's introduction (CONTENTL 1) 2. Editor's bibliography on postcard-based research (CONTENTL 2) 3. 20 papers divided into 3 sections (CONTENTL 3)
Evaluation	
Positive aspects	1. (Papers:) written with enthusiasm and commitment (ASSESS)
Negative aspects	2. Lack of homogeneity/lack of discussion about digital production of postcards (NEGASS)
Usefulness for/and potential readership	3. Readership: anybody (of journal's readers) keen on postcards and library professionals who are tired up of other professional literature (READERS)

Table 3

Analysis of the genre “book advertisement”, based on Paltridge (1995)

CULTURE

CONTEXT

GENRE:
Book advertisement

<p>SITUATION: Specialized, informative journal</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Interactional frame:</u></p> <p><u>Author</u> Publisher</p> <p><u>Audience</u> Workers and scholars in the library and neighboring fields</p> <p><u>Message form</u> English</p> <p><u>Channel</u> Written</p> <p><u>Code</u> ‘standard’</p> <p><u>Topic</u> <i>x contains y; x is y, etc.</i></p> <p><u>Setting</u> Specialized informative journal</p> <p><u>Props</u> Book cover design accompanying text physical description of book ISBN in bold publisher’s name highlighted at bottom</p> <p><u>Function</u> To promote a product</p>

<p>CONCEPT Marketing paradigm</p>
<p><u>Cognitive/ Conceptual frame:</u> Commercial promotion paradigm</p> <p><u>Scenario</u> New book about ...</p> <p><u>Roles</u> Subjects</p> <p><u>Discourse elements and relation/s</u> solution element - Situation: problem – evaluation of solution element</p> <p><u>Components of discourse elements</u> 1st. General presentation; 2nd. content description; 3rd. evaluation.</p> <p><u>Semantic relations</u> statement, means-purpose</p> <p><u>Associated words</u> Subjective, marked terms; technical or specialized taxonomies</p> <p><u>Institutional understandings</u> Protocol of academic discourse community; ideologies; expectations; shared understandings; role relationships; attitudes and beliefs; etc.</p>

Table 4
 Analysis of the genre “book review”, based on Paltridge (1995)

CULTURE	CONTEXT
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 0 auto; width: fit-content;"> <p style="text-align: center;">GENRE <i>Book review</i></p> </div>	
<p style="text-align: center;">SITUATION: Scientific article</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Interactional frame:</u></p> <p><u>Writer</u> Scientist, academic or research worker, etc</p> <p><u>Audience</u> Scientists, academics or research workers, etc</p> <p><u>Message form</u> English</p> <p><u>Channel</u> Written</p> <p><u>Code</u> ‘standard’</p> <p><u>Topic</u> x contains y; x is y, etc.</p> <p><u>Setting</u> Specialized journal</p> <p><u>Props</u> Complete book reference highlighted, specification of reviewer’s name and position, evaluation according to type of work, etc</p> <p><u>Function</u> To inform about the usefulness/ interest of a new work to potential readers</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">CONCEPT: research paradigm</p> <p><u>Cognitive-conceptual frame:</u> Academic/ research paradigm</p> <p><u>Scenario</u> Content and usefulness of published output</p> <p><u>Roles</u> Subjects</p> <p><u>Discourse elements and relations</u> Solution element – Situation: problem – evaluation of solution element</p> <p><u>Components of discourse elements</u> 1st. General presentation; 2nd. detailed description; 3rd. evaluation.</p> <p><u>Semantic relations</u> Statement, means -purpose</p> <p><u>Associated words</u> Technical taxonomies, marked language</p> <p><u>Institutional understandings</u> Protocol of scientific/ academic discourse community; ideologies; expectations; shared understandings; role relationships; attitudes and beliefs; etc.</p>

communicative function is another clearly distinctive element. While the aim of the advert is to promote a given product, in this case a book or similar document, the function of the reviewer, at least apparently, is to inform readers of the same scientific or academic network about the usefulness of this new document, in an apparently altruistic fashion. This slight difference has its effects on the textual configurations, though, with respect to evaluation. Thus, in the case of the advert the assessment will always be positive, in order to attract potential purchasers, while in the case of the review both positive and negative assessment could be found, as in the sample selected. Despite what has just been said, though, differences become rather blurred, as reviews can be used, like adverts, in order to promote a given scholar.⁶ This practice, which can be considered ‘deviant’ in the academic world, is very common in wider contexts’ reviews, such as in the case of reviews for restaurants or commercial services as provided in papers and magazines, so in this case review and advert become extremely close. In the case of film reviews, this is not necessarily so, and, probably, the more serious the publication, the more likely it is that both types of assessment occur. This is just an example of the dynamic nature of genres, which rather than present clear-cut boundaries, form a continuum. As Bhatia (2001) has pointed out, they can be grouped as *colonies*, characterised by prevailing features, and a necessary linking which must be established between the actual genre type and the discourse community to which it belongs.

- As regards the *cognitive-conceptual frame*, it is in the conventional institutions where more differentiating factors are to be found, as was previously explained. Discoursal elements and components do not show great differences in prototypical genre instances, and it is the interpreting of the message by part of the discourse community what gives them their identity. Thus, as has been previously commented, a review can have a negative assessment component, whose presence could be linked to a journal’s scientific character or seriousness; on the contrary, this type of evaluation can never be expected in an advert. Another peculiarity of scientific reviews is that they follow certain guidelines depending on the type of work. In the case of a scientific monograph, for instance, reviewers bring into the review much of their own knowledge, trying to delimit the work’s scope and contribution to the corresponding scientific area. But, at the same time, this is not an exclusive feature of reviews, and can also appear in adverts, to a lesser extent, though.

The main differences between the two genres are located, thus, on one hand with respect to the level of *sender*, *communicative function*, and *props* within the interactional frame,

⁶ This is possibly the reason why Bhatia (2001) includes certain types of review within the promotional *genre colony*.

and *conventional institutions*, within the cognitive-conceptual frame. It could be derived that, if in the case of language learning, and more specifically reading comprehension, these parameters are not taken into account, a student could mistake one genre for another at a given moment, due to their structural similarities and to the range of features they share in their contextual frames.

5. Conclusion

The review of literature has shown the need of differentiating more clearly the concepts of text type from genre type, as key ones in Applied Linguistics. This differentiation runs in parallel with the consideration of a sociocultural shared context (Akman, 2000) in the treatment of linguistic phenomena. Taking Paltridge's model for analyzing genre instances, the need of this differentiation has been exemplified through the comparison of two related by different genres, the book advert and the book review. This could be just taken as trying to go further on a certain theory for the sake of it, but it has serious implications for the world of teaching language, especially when sociocultural conventions are not necessarily shared, as in the case of foreign languages.

It can be inferred, for instance, that the reading comprehension of a text is not complete if the aspects related to genre are not recognized, i.e., if genre or rhetorical schemata are not used. These may be used either consciously or unconsciously, in order to associate the given text to a sociocultural frame, and to interpret cues as pointing to conventions shared by a given discourse community.

Most of the works on foreign language reading comprehension dealing with a reportedly generic dimension are rather biased towards texts' external configuration when trying to get data related to comprehension. The methods used for checking comprehension consist nearly exclusively in the analysis of recall protocols. This allows getting information about the retention of ideas at both micro and macrostructure levels, but does not necessarily inform about the readers' recognition of contextual cues; on the other hand, there is a lack of data about genres per se.

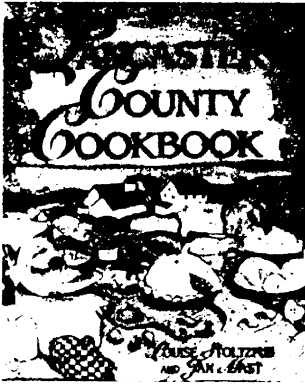
Parameters like the ones described in Paltridge's works, which are not necessarily of linguistic nature, may allow to measure the actual knowledge subjects possess about generic conventions, and to detect whether these are used as a tool in the reading process. The concept of reading comprehension itself is affected, as it should not only mean the grasping of textual content as a sequence of ideas (macrostructure), but also the recognition of sociocultural conventions evoked by the arrangement of cues at every level.

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Appendix A. Book advert and book review samples

Book advert



Lancaster County Cookbook by Louise Stoltzfus & Jan Mast

The residents of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, are famous for their Pennsylvania Dutch cooking. With Pepper Cabbage, Chicken Potpie, Creamed Celery, Apple Dumplings, Whoopie Pies, Funnel Cakes, and Shoo-fly Pie, this new cookbook overflows with their old-time traditional recipes.

Stoltzfus is author of the enormously popular *Favorite Recipes from Quilters*.

Cooks from every corner of Lancaster County and the various sections of Lancaster City submitted their favorite family recipes to be included in this timeless collection. From their kitchens comes this compilation, filled with recipes which are easy to prepare and pleasant to the palate.

A collection of essays also profiles particular Lancaster County villages and several sections of Lancaster City. A wonderful treasure for people everywhere.

7 x 9 • 256 pages • 8 color plates • ISBN: 1-56148-092-4 • \$13.95, paper

ks

P. O. Box 419, Intercourse, PA 17534
Call toll-free 800/762-7171 (In Canada, call collect 717/768-7171)

*Book review***Postcards in the Library: Invaluable Visual Resources**

Norman D. Stevens (Ed.), 1995,
Haworth Press, 233 pp., \$39.95,
hb, ISBN 1-56024-776-2

This book is a lively and delightful introduction to the world of postcards in libraries. This area of popular culture has probably been ignored (or at least seriously relegated) by libraries which have had too many more important priorities. It starts with an excellent introduction by the editor Norman D. Stevens, who also provides a bibliography of postcard based research. He fills in the background to this medium, explaining how libraries have acquired collections by accident or other haphazard means. Because of their low priority very little bibliographic control has been exerted, yet postcards can hold much useful and important information.

The body of the work consists of a collection of papers (with a strong US emphasis) treating postcard collections under three main headings: descriptions of some collections, their effective use and exploitation for scholarly purposes, and some papers giving advice on the various issues in collection development. Many subject areas are covered including geographical, historical and medical collections, with some although not many illustrations. The twenty papers vary in approach from descriptive to analytical, but most of them are written with an enthusiasm and commitment that communicates well to the reader.

One disappointment is the lack of discussion of making the postcards available digitally, although there are some instances of automated access described. This is no doubt a result of their marginal place in libraries so far and let

us hope may be the subject of a further volume in a year or two. Recommended not only for those who have shoeboxes full of dusty postcards in the attic but also for anyone who is jaded from too much other professional literature. This monograph was originally published as *Popular Culture in Libraries*, volume 3, number 2, 1995.

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