



THE BEGINNINGS OF EMU – A GENRE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The goal of this paper is to outline a general approach to Genre Theory, focusing on a Register and Genre Analysis of some business texts. The analysis is centered on a text regarding the anti-monetary globalization of the European Union at the beginning of the European Monetary Union.

Keywords

Genre, discourse, field, tenor, mode, European Monetary Union

1. Introduction

The first part of this analysis is dealing with Genre Theory and it is trying to define the concept of genre according to the domain of Critical Discourse Analysis I have also tried to make a distinction between the concepts of genre and discourse, which are very much alike, but we must not take one for the other. It is true that their field of interest is almost the same and their definitions sound synonymous, but great researchers are still arguing about the matter trying their best at defining the concepts as clearly as possible. The paper will concentrate on outlining the systemic functional approach to register and genre analysis. The systemic approach not only provides a detailed description of the functions and structures in English, but goes further and relates the contextual dimension of register to the semantic and grammatical organization of language itself.

2. Theoretical Background

While defining the concept of genre I have also mentioned the connections and interference with other domains such as: literature, rhetoric, sociology and linguistics.

The second chapter is destined to the specific terminology, which will be the base of the analyses applied on different texts in the second chapter. Here, in the second subchapter, we will encounter the main terms – *field*, *mode*, *tenor* – and connections with linguistics – specification of lexical, grammatical and semantic patterns, features of discourse and variables of socio-cultural context. With this chapter we can also encounter famous names of great scholars among whom, Halliday (with his definitions and schemas), Martin and van Dijk. We can find here the coordinates of Register & Genre Theory, as well as their discourse-semantic and lexical – grammatical patterns.

The use of genre relevant to this study is glossed by all three dictionaries mentioned above as a *category of artistic composition, marked by a distinctive style, form or content*. However, today, genre is quite easily understood as referring to “a distinctive category of discourse of any type, spoken or written, with or without literary aspirations” (Swales, 1990:33).

Even so, with so many definitions, genre remains a blurry concept because of its frequent connections and interference with discourse, literature, rhetoric, pragmatics and many other domains. And as is also the case for such related concepts as language, communication, interaction, society and culture, the notion of genre is essentially fuzzy. The use of genre as a concept in register and genre analysis differs from this traditional use in two important respects. Firstly, linguistic definitions of genre draw on Russian literary theorist Bakhtin’s (1986) identification of speech genres as “relatively stable types” of interactive utterances. This broadens genre to include everyday as well as literary genres, in both written and spoken modes. Secondly, linguists define genres functionally in terms of their social purpose. Thus different genres are different ways of using language to achieve different culturally established tasks, and texts of different genres are texts which are achieving different purposes in the culture.

“To persist in discussing genres today might seem like an idle if not anachronistic pastime. Everybody knows that they existed in the good old days of the classics – ballads, odes, sonnets, tragedies and comedies – but today?” (Todorov, 1976:159). In fact, nowadays works disobey their genres, but this does not mean that the genuine literary genres disappear; they transgress in order to exist. A new genre is always born from a mixture of other genres, or the transformation or several old genres by means of inversion,

displacement, or combination. “A genre, literary or otherwise, is nothing but a codification of discursive properties.” (Todorov, 1976:162)

Since genre and discourse are very much alike, I shall talk a little about discourse as well. The two concepts intermingle as to the point when they become one and the same, they identify themselves, and they both take the form of *language use*. This characterization of discourse embodies some functional aspects, such as “*who* uses language, *how*, *why* and *when*” (van Dijk, 1997:2). Thus we are dealing with a three dimensional concept which includes language use, communication beliefs and interaction in social situations.

Following the ideas of context dependency, meaning in context and relating language to context Halliday (1985a/1989:12) and many others, included in the bibliography, have developed a schema which transforms the analysis of a text in a judgment of a triadic nature, whose main domains of interest are: *field*, *tenor* and *mode*.

a. *Field, the social action*: what is happening, the nature of the social action that is taking place: what it is that the participants are engaged in, in which the language figures as some essential component.

b. *Tenor, the role structure*: who is taking part, the nature of the participants, their statuses and roles: what kind of role relationship obtain among the participants, including permanent and temporary relationships of one kind or another, both the types of speech role that they are taking on in the dialogue and the whole cluster of socially significant relationships in which they are involved.

c. *Mode, the symbolic organization*: what part language is playing, what it is that the participants are expecting the language to do for them in the situation: the symbolic organization of the text, the status that it has, and its function in the context, including the channel (is it spoken or written or some combination of the two?) and also the rhetorical mode, what is being achieved by the text in terms of such categories as persuasive, expository, didactic and the like.

The schema outlined above is taken from Halliday, 1985a/1989:12 (van Dijk, 1997:238)

This way, language can be related to context with ideational meaning used to construct field (the social action), interpersonal meaning to negotiate tenor (the role structure) and textual meaning used to develop mode (symbolic organization).

The three terms, which will constitute the theoretical basis of the analyses discussed in the following chapters, have been defined and redefined, since “the environment (or social context) of language is structured as a field of significant social action, a tenor of role relationship, and a mode of symbolic

organization” (Halliday, 1978:143). *The social action* is that which is going on, and has a certain meaning recognized in the social system. It represents a complex of acts in some ordered configuration within which the text is playing the part of “subject matter”. *The role structure* represents a cluster of social relationships between the participants engaged in the act of communication (either written or spoken). The participants’ attributes and the role relationships are specific to the situation, to the speech act, to the deictic referents, and they are accomplished through the exchange of verbal meanings.

3. The Analysis

The sample on which genre analysis is applied represents a part of Professor WillelmBuiters’ lectures on the Economic Monetary Union. The text still a part of another lecture entitled *Alice in Euroland*, published the same year 1999, March 17. It is written in a sarcastic tone (mocking the members of the European Union, who are compared to the characters in Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*), and it presents facts which support the writer’s hypothesis – “great idea, shame about the execution”. The end of the text presents some pieces of advice given by the author to the Governing Council of the European Union, still preserving the ironic-metaphorical language and the fine, subtle humorist style that characterizes the author.

Sample text:

Monetary unions between admitted unequals, the monetary equivalent of a marriage between an elephant and a mouse, have endured on a number of occasions without either prior political union or subsequent political unification or absorption. Belgium and Luxembourg were in a monetary union from 1922 until they were both absorbed in Euroland in 1999. France-Andorra, France-Monaco, Italy-Vatican City, Italy-San Marino and Switzerland-Liechtenstein are other examples.[...]

[...] Monetary unions among near-equals that occurred without prior political unification and that did not subsequently lead to political unification, have not survived. The Latin Monetary Union among France, Belgium, Switzerland and Italy, and the Scandinavian Monetary Union among Sweden, Denmark and Norway, began in 1865 and 1873, respectively. They lasted in practice until World War I, although both arrangements were only officially put out of their misery in the 1920s.[...]

[...] I have considerable sympathy for the long-standing German position that further political integration should have accompanied (or even preceded) monetary union. On the other hand, the whole European integration experiment, from the Coal and Steel Community on, has been a political wolf

dressed in economic sheep's clothing. It has been successful so far, and it could continue to be so. It is essential, however, that the European Parliament act as an effective watchdog over the ECB (European Central Bank). (Buiter, March 17, 1999:17)

This text is highly metaphorical, but it is argumentative and well-structured in order to sustain the author's views against the Economic and Monetary Union. Thus, it will seem as being some sort of contrastive analysis, but in fact it is the analysis of another text written by the same author (Buiter, June 29, 1999:17).

Field: the participants, processes and circumstances of the social activity in its lexis.

As it was mentioned before, field links the social activity, which is part of the text with the lexis. The lexical items must be appropriate for the type of discourse they belong to, in order to be able to realize the action implied by the text.

Again, this text, as the other one, belongs to the same category where social activity expressed is: lecturing. The text presents facts in favour of the writer's opinions. In the beginning, he presents historical facts that involve the "subject matter", i.e. monetary unions, which are to support his claims.

The historical facts are presented in a sort of crescendo, firstly describing unions between powerful and powerless countries, and then, unions between "near-equals". It is not at all a chronological description of other attempts of unification, but one fact is clear: they are all examples of failures, due to the lack of a prior political unification. Practically, the writer explains why he is against EMU. It is not a problem of decision or choice (being for or against the action started by the EU), but a matter of how the issue is dealt with. Professor Buiter is actually against the way the EMU is accomplished.

The first paragraph opens with the subject matter ("monetary unions"), which is to appear twice in this form, and one other time under the form of a very subtle and coloured metaphor: "*monetary...marriage*".

Then, there comes the second subject matter, that one which interests the writer the most, and that is: the prior political union, which, according to the author, is to be done before any monetary union. This second subject matter, that seems to be more important, is also mentioned twice, still in the first paragraph. A third mentioning comes under the form of a metaphor too ("*absorption*"), at the end of the first complex sentence.

In the second paragraph we find out about unions among countries that are almost equal as regards the economic power. Here, we find the first subject matter – monetary unions – also as the opening phrase of the paragraph, and mentioned three times. However, towards the end of the paragraph it is pointed out again,

in the shape of a metaphor ("*arrangements*") and referred to by the use of the personal pronoun "they".

As to the second subject matter – political unification –, the reader can only find it mentioned twice in the same sentence. Yet, only twice mentioned, this second subject matter is stressed by the combination of words that surround the idea: "...*did not* subsequently lead to political unification...", "...*have not survived*."

The third paragraph is totally different from the other two, as it opens with the personal pronoun "I" that identifies the author and exposes his own, personal beliefs about the problem in discussion. In this paragraph we can only encounter the first subject matter written once, and the second subject matter under the masks of: "*political integration*", "*European integration*", "*political wolf*", "*and the European Parliament*", "*effective watchdog*".

The last part of the fragment becomes very literary, as the language is more and more metaphorical, but unceasing to be ironic: "*a political wolf dressed in economic sheep's clothing*." The climax of this last part unbelievably consists of the last sentence, which is a real warning for the EU members. In this last sentence the two subject matters "change costumes" and appear on stage as the two enemies who are trying to take over the control: "*watchdog*" represents the European Parliament (the political union) and "*ECB*" represents the economic issue (the monetary union).

Mode: the creation of text in a situation

With mode, I will try to analyze the physical distance between the participants to the act of communication and the role that language is playing in the interaction (producer-text-receiver). Thus, with mode, I will try to make an analysis based on the thematic organization at the clause level.

- *Monetary unions between admitted unequals, the monetary equivalent of a marriage between an elephant and a mouse, have endured on a number of occasions...*

In this fragment, the first subject matter, which opens the paragraph, is the subject of the sentence and it holds the thematic role of experiencer. The rest of the sentence introduces the second subject matter:

- *...without either prior political union or subsequent political unification or absorption*

Here, "political union" and its other euphemisms have the function of prepositional objects that embody the role of null goal – the negative dimension being given by the annulling preposition "without".

- *Belgium and Luxembourg were in a monetary union from 1922 until they were both absorbed in Euroland...*

The next sentence involves the participants – the subjects – firstly mentioned explicitly with their names, and then referred to by the help of the personal

3rd person plural pronoun “they”. Their thematic role is that of patients in both cases. This sentence also contains a goal “Euroland”, but this time the goal is reached. The rest of the paragraph includes other examples of such patients as the first two.

- *Monetary unions among near-equals that occurred without prior political unification and that did not subsequently lead to political unification, have not survived.*

The second paragraph opens exactly the same as the first one, with the first subject matter as subject and experiencer, and the second subject matter holding the function of prepositional object that embody the role of null goal – the negative dimension being given once, by the annulling preposition “without”, and the second time by the negated verb “lead”.

- *The Latin Monetary Union among France, Belgium, Switzerland and Italy, and the Scandinavian Monetary Union among Sweden, Denmark and Norway, began...*

The next sentence presents again the first subject matter as other examples of patients, but saving the result for the last part:

- *They lasted in practice until World War I, although both arrangements were only officially put out of their misery...*

The patients are revealed in the third sentence too, by the use of the personal pronoun denoting the former subjects, and by the metaphorical use of the same idea in the form of “arrangements”. The goal is again not reached, and we learn that by the negative connotation of the phrasal verb “put out of”.

- *...further political integration should have accompanied (or even preceded) monetary union.*

With the last paragraph things change a little. The second subject matter becomes subject with a possible role of agent, denied by the use of the subjunctive mood “should have accompanied”. The first subject matter remains a patient, except this time, it has the function of direct object. The non-agent and the patient reinforce the author’s opinions against the EU’s topic.

Tenor: the construction of participants as social actors

As I have mentioned before, this is a text produced by a professor of International Macroeconomics, who lectures about his opinions about the monetary union within the EU. And because we are interested in the reaction of the individuals who read the text, a very significant part of the analysis is that focused on the tenor relations it renders. The text is a study of the same case, in which the author states his point of view: its function is to inform its readers and explain why he is not in favour of the issue. In terms of power relation between the writer and his readers there is a high distance created by the amount of historical and

economic knowledge and the ability of comprehension. As regards contact and affect between producer and receiver of the text, the writer presents himself as a very authorial and superior power, as he closes the fragment with a warning. The receiver is not directly addressed in the text, but the producer is clearly shaped and easily identified by the use of the first person singular pronoun “I”, with which the last paragraph begins.

4. Conclusions

As a result, the hypothesis mentioned in the introduction, that specialized texts involve a high power distance between producer and receiver turned out to be valid. With the sample text, power distance was constructed on authority and the writer presented himself as a very authorial and superior power. The overall view of this analysis showed that the author’s predictions were right, as the affect between producer and receiver resulted to be a very high experiential and interpersonal distance.

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