

15. News genres

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1. Introduction

The term “genre” refers to a *type* of text or communicative event. Genre analysis should therefore aim to bring out the characteristics of types of texts. The problem is, this can be done in many different ways. The everyday words we use to refer to genres of text characterize them in terms of their subject matters (e.g. “Westerns”, “romances”), their functions (“advertisements” seek to persuade, “sermons” to teach a moral lesson), their truth claims (e.g. “fiction”, “documentary”, “report”, “opinion piece”), their effects (“thrillers” seek to thrill, “comedies” to raise a laugh), or their forms and mediums (e.g. “musicals” incorporate song, “radio plays” use the medium of sound broadcasting). In this chapter “genre” will be used in the narrower and more specific sense which it has acquired in linguistics and discourse analysis over the past 30 years or so – as characterizing texts and communicative events in terms of the way they embody particular types of interaction that come with particular relationships between the interactants (e.g. participants in a dialogue, or writers and readers) and with particular communicative functions (e.g. persuading, teaching, entertaining).

In this conception “genre” is distinct from two other ways of characterizing texts (cf. e.g. Fairclough 2000; van Leeuwen 2005). The first is *discourse*, the subject matter of the text, together with the interpretation that is put on to it, in other words, the way the text constructs a particular kind of representation of the aspect(s) of reality of which it speaks. The second is *style*, the way in which a text expresses the identity of the speaker or writer (or the organisation or institution on whose behalf he or she speaks or writes). All texts and communicative events can be, and perhaps should be, analyzed in all three of these ways, as illustrated by this example from *Cosmopolitan* magazine (USA version, November 2004, p. 146):

Sip a soothing beverage

The act of slowly drinking any hot liquid calms you down, says New York City psychotherapist Anne Rosen Noran, PhD. Green tea is your best bet since it's packed with skin-beautifying antioxidants. Try Susan Ciminelli Afternoon Delight Tea, \$ 15.

The text is based on a discourse of tea drinking – “a” discourse, because there can be several. Tea drinking can be interpreted as something you do as a “connoisseur”, to seek refined pleasures, or as something you do for purposes of health or beauty, as in this case, where slowly drinking tea “calms you down” and beautifies your skin. And that does not exhaust the possibilities.

As a genre, the text is a typical "advertorial" – a mixture of providing information ("The act of slowly drinking [...] calms you down"), advice ("Green tea is your best bet") and persuasion ("Try Susan Ciminelli Afternoon Delight Tea"). The direct address ("you") and the use of imperatives is typical of the kind of relations which writers of such material try to set up with their readers.

In terms of style, the piece conveys a hybrid identity. It combines the voice of the expert (the mention of the psychotherapist's PhD, expressions like "the act of drinking" and terms like "antioxidants") with the voice of the advertiser ("Try Susan Ciminelli Afternoon Delight Tea") and with a casual, conversational style that makes the message sound more like the advice of a friend than the advice of an expert ("your best bet", "it's packed with").

2. The concept of genre

As mentioned above, the term "genre" is narrowed down here to refer to texts and communicative events as pieces of interaction that create specific kinds of relations between their interactants, and fulfil specific communicative functions, for instance bonding, entertaining, persuading, teaching, etc. Analysing texts and communicative events in terms of their "genre" is therefore (1) describing what people do to, for, or with each other by means of texts and communicative events, and (2) describing how the way in which they do this helps set up or maintain specific relationships (formal or informal, equal or unequal, and so on).

Longacre (1974) distinguished four basic types of genre: the narrative genre; the procedural genre (the "how-to-do-it" or "how-it-is-done" text); the expository genre, which describes, explains and interprets the world; and the hortatory genre, which aims to "influence conduct", to get people to feel or think or do in certain ways. He claimed that these genres are universal, and studied examples from various traditional societies (Longacre 1971), correlating their functions (entertaining, instructing, explaining, persuading, etc) to the linguistic features that typically manifest them, as shown in Table 1 below.

Narratives, Longacre (1974) said, are about people and their actions, and link these actions chronologically (which of course does not exclude flashbacks, parallel stories and so on). As they deal with events that have already happened, they must be told in "accomplished time", and in the first or third person. Changing one or other of these features creates special types of narratives: a narrative in "non-accomplished" time is the special case of "prophecy", for instance, and a narrative in the second person will either praise or accuse the addressee(s).

Table 1. Longacre's discourse genres

	- prescriptive	+ prescriptive
+ chronological	<i>Narrative</i> First or third person Actor-oriented Accomplished time (encoded as past or present) Chronological linkage	<i>Procedural</i> Non-specific person Goal oriented Projected time (encoded as past, present or future) Chronological linkage
- chronological	<i>Expository</i> Any person (usually third) Subject matter oriented Time not focal Logical linkage	<i>Hortatory</i> Second person Addressee oriented Commands, suggestions (encoded as imperatives or "soft" commands) Logical linkage

Procedural texts also deal with actions but for purposes of "how to do it" instruction. They may use imperatives ("wash the vegetables"), "we" ("first, we wash the vegetables") or "you" ("first you wash the vegetables"), but no specific people are addressed and the focus is on the sequence of actions that is being explained (which must be chronologically ordered if the instructions are to be effective).

Expository texts do not narrate specific events in chronological order but link more general statements in some form of logical structure, for instance an "argument" or an "explanation". Hortatory texts, finally, are like procedural texts in that they address the listeners or readers directly, in order to persuade them to do or think or feel something. Their structure, however, is logical, as in expository texts: reasons must be given, for instance, for why things should be done, or why they should be done in the way proposed.

Longacre stressed that the features that manifest these genres are "deep structure", semantic features. For instance, in a procedural text, time is always "projected", always oriented towards the future because the task that is being explained has not yet been performed by the listener or reader. But this need not be realized by future tense. A procedural text may also take the form of a "case story", or "best practice example". On the surface it will then have the features Longacre described as typical of narratives. But a closer look would show that all the stages of a particular process are included, so that the text can serve as instruction just as surely as a straightforward procedural text. As a whole, such texts will then combine the entertainment function of the narrative with the instructional function of the procedural text. As Walter Ong has shown (1982: 43), this was common in oral story telling traditions:

The articulation of such things as navigation procedures (...) would have been encountered not in any abstract manual-style description but (...) embedded in a narrative presenting specific commands for human action or accounts of specific acts.

But it is common in today's media as well, for instance in celebrity profiles in women's magazines, which often provide what is, from the point of view of narrative flow, an excess of detail on the beauty and health regimes that keep them looking young and beautiful.

In addition to describing the typical features and functions of all four of these genres, Longacre also described the typical beginning-middle-end structure of narratives, as did Labov, more or less at the same time (Labov 1972). Later this approach was extended also to non-narrative genres (Hasan 1978; Martin 1985, 1992; van Leeuwen 1987; Ventola 1987; Swales 1990). The essential characteristics of the approach are as follows:

- A genre is described as a series of "stages", each of which has a specific function in moving the text or communicative event forward towards the realization of its ultimate communicative aim. In the analysis each stage is given a functional label to bring out this function, e.g. "Revealing a problem", "Appealing for help" etc. in the following example, which is taken from a magazine advice column in the Indian version of *Cosmopolitan* magazine (November 2001: 58):

I lied on my CV	<i>Revealing a problem (confession)</i>
Should I come clean with my boss?	<i>Appealing for help (question)</i>
Yes	<i>Providing a solution (answer)</i>
But be prepared for the possibility of losing your job if you have a scrupulous boss	<i>Issuing a caveat (warning)</i>
The bright side: you will gain her respect if you speak up and accept your mistake and having got this burden off your chest will help you focus better on your work	<i>Predicting the result (prediction 1)</i> <i>(prediction 2)</i>

- Each stage consists of one or more of the same speech acts (e.g. "question", "answer", "warning" etc. in the above example). In the example the first stage contains only one "confession", but in many other advice columns the "revealing a problem" stage might be a short narrative containing a *series* of confessions.
- The sequence of stages as a whole realizes a particular strategy for achieving an overall communicative goal, in this case the solution of a problem.
- Because each stage is homogeneous in terms of the communicative acts it contains, it will also be relatively homogeneous in terms of the linguistic features that characterize it. The "revealing a problem" stage of an advice

column, for instance, will have the features typical of confessions: first person, statements, past tense and verbs that express what is, in the context, considered to be a deviant action or state.

We can now see that genres are not as homogeneous as Longacre's characterizations might have us believe. Advice columns, for instance, can be characterized by the ways in which they *combine* narrative, explanatory, hortatory, and sometimes also procedural stages. Not all the stages in the above example would occur in every advice column. "Predicting the result" could be omitted, for example. For this reason genre analysts often indicate which stages are indispensable ("obligatory") and which "optional" (e.g. Hasan 1978). It is not possible, for instance, to have an advice column without, at the very least, a problem and a solution, in that order (an advertisement, on the other hand, *could* offer a solution before indicating the problems it might solve).

3. Stories

Journalists refer to news, not as "articles", but as "stories": "A good journalist 'gets good stories' or 'knows a good story'. A critical news editor asks: 'Is this really a story?' or 'Where's the story in this?'" (Bell 1991: 147).

But journalists' stories differ from most other stories, including such media stories as magazine feature articles. The best way to bring this out is by reference to Labov's (1972) classic account of narrative. It was originally written as an analysis of a specific kind of narrative, the boasting stories of Harlem teenagers, but turned out to apply to many other kinds of stories, and it uses the approach described in the previous section of this chapter: dividing narratives into stages, and showing the communicative function of each stage as well as the way these stages, through the particular order in which they occur, create the communicative function of the narrative as a whole – the way it entertains and enthralls an audience by telling a story, and the way it delivers something of relevance to the listeners' lives.

In describing Labov's stages I will use a feature article from *Cosmopolitan* magazine (USA version, November 2004: 92–95).

1 Abstract

The storyteller begins with a brief summary or indication of the topic of the story, to attract the listener's attention and interest:

Her Bridesmaids were Killed on Their Way to the Wedding.

What was to be the happiest day of Bree Mayer's life turned into the worst with one phone call. She shared her heartbreaking experience with *Cosmo*.

2 Orientation

The storyteller then introduces the setting – who is involved, when and where – and the “initial event”, the event that kicks off the story. This provides orientation for the listener. Elements of orientation may also occur later in the story as new people, places and things are introduced.

Joey and I met in 2000, when we were both freshmen at North Central University in Minnesota. We were in a gospel band on campus; he played the guitar and I sang. I was intrigued by Joey because he seemed kind of mysterious (...) One day, Joey invited me on a boat ride, but we ran out of gas in the middle of the lake. Since we didn't have any oars, we were stuck, so we started talking. By the time someone paddled out to rescue us I knew I wanted to spend a lot more time with this guy.

3 Complication

The story then moves into the events that make up its core: Joey and Bree decide to get married. Joey's three sisters will be bridesmaids and are due to attend the pre-wedding “bachelorette's party”. They are late to arrive. Then there is a phonecall and Bree learns that all three have died in a road accident.

4 Evaluation

Throughout the development of the story there are moments of evaluation. At such moments the storyteller reasserts the relevance, importance and interest of the story. In this story this is done mostly by indicating and reinforcing the narrator's feelings about the events:

“I was in total shock”
“I felt completely numb”

5 Resolution

The final event, the outcome of the story, provides the listener with meaning. Stories are told to convey ideas about life. They have an issue, a life problem, to resolve. In this case the issue in need of resolution is whether, such a short time after the tragedy, the wedding should or should not go ahead. The resolution is that it should. Marriage is a celebration of love, and “love can heal”.

6 Coda

This stage, which is “optional”, has the storyteller signing off and making a bridge from the resolution to the “here and now” of the telling of the story, and to its continuing relevance for the storyteller and/or the listeners. Here is the coda of the *Cosmopolitan* story:

Now we try to take it one day at a time. Some are more difficult than others, but we're settling into the routine of any couple. We miss the girls terribly. But we are helping each other deal with the loss and learning to balance grief with joy.

All these stages are realized by specific linguistic features, as indicated by the examples in this table:

Table 2. Speech acts and their realizations

Stages and their typical speech acts	Typical realizations	Examples
Abstract (speech acts of summarizing and attracting interest)	Action clauses summarizing the story; relational clauses with evaluative attribute	Her bridesmaids were killed on their way to the wedding. What was to be the happiest day of Bree Mayer's life turned into the worst.
Orientation (speech acts of description)	E.g. relational clauses describing people and places	He seemed mysterious. We were in a band.
Complication (speech acts of narration)	Action clauses	Alyssa then called the highway patrol. He looked at me and said: “They're dead. They're all dead.”
Evaluation (speech acts of emotive expression)	E.g. first person relational clauses with mental process attributes	I was in shock. I felt completely numb.
Coda (general observations of the impact of the narrated events)	E.g. clauses of habitualized action or relational clauses with mental process attribute.	We are helping each other deal with the loss. Some (days) are more difficult than others.

4. News stories

The typical “hard news” story differs from the classic “complication-resolution” story described above in a number of ways. As van Dijk (1988: 176) has said, “News reports in the press are a member of a family of media types that need their own structural analysis”. The account below is based on the analysis of van Dijk (1988), Bell (1991), Iedema, Feez and White (1994) and White (1998).

I use the first five paragraphs of the following *Sydney Morning Herald* story (22 October 2005: 15) as an example:

Hurricane's fury echoes that of Katrina official

Powerful winds and lashing rain pounded the Yucatan Peninsula, one of Mexico's top tourist destinations, as thousands of tourists went to ground in shelters to escape a weakening-then-strengthening Hurricane Wilma.

The category four hurricane is likely to strike densely populated Southern Florida late tomorrow.

Described by forecasters as extremely dangerous, Wilma was expected to send a three-metre surge of water over Mexico's "Maya Riviera" early this morning.

It killed 10 people in mudslides in Haiti earlier this week.

Mexican authorities said yesterday nearly 22,000 tourists and residents had been evacuated from low-lying coastal areas. In one gymnasium shelter in Cancun, 1600 people spent Thursday night on mattresses.

The first point to make is this: the news story has a beginning, but no end. Like the classic complication-resolution story, it begins with an abstract. But it does not end with a resolution and a coda. And the abstract, or "lead" as it is called by journalists ("intro" in the US), does not serve to entice the listener or reader into the story, but instead conveys, without delay, the whole of the "central event" of the story, as concisely as possible, in maximally 40, preferably only 30-odd words. Any "orientation" is tightly wrapped into this, rather than presented separately. We do not have, for instance, "Yucatan is one of Mexico's top tourist destinations" but "pounded the Yucatan peninsula, one of Mexico's top tourist destinations". As former *Sunday Times* editor Harold Evans said (1972: 158), in a story, the writer "begins at the beginning and goes step by step to the stirring conclusion", but "for most hard news, story-telling is too slow a technique".

Secondly, while the "Hurricane Wilma" story is an "action story", a story recounting actions and events, these actions and events are not necessarily told in their chronological order. During most of the 19th century, news stories were still organized chronologically, as for instance in this example from the *Sydney Gazette* of March 5, 1803:

On Tuesday, the 15th ultimo, fifteen labouring men fled from the Agricultural Settlement at Castle Hill, after having committed many acts of violence and atrocity. They at first forcibly entered the dwellinghouse of M. DECLAMB, which they ransacked, and stripped of many articles of plate, wearing apparel, some fire and side arms, provisions, spirituous liquors, a quantity of which they drank or wasted in the house. They next proceeded to the farm houses of Bradley and Bean, at Baulkham Hills. Mrs. Bradley's servant man they wantonly and inhumanly discharged a pistol at, the contents of which so shattered his face as to render him a ghastly spectacle, in all probability, during the remainder of his life. In Mrs. Beane's house they gave loose to sensuality, equally brutal and unmanly. Numerous other delinquencies were perpetuated by this licentious banditti, whose ravages, however, could not escape the certain tread of justice.

But from the 1880s onward, the modern newspaper story developed, with its focus on a single central event, and its "inverted pyramid" structure. To bring this out, the following summary of the "Hurricane Wilma" story reconstructs the chronological order of events from the story's many time indications ("earlier in the week", "early this morning", "late tomorrow" etc.), and uses numbers in brackets to indicate the place of the events in the story as it was actually published:

1. Hurricane Wilma kills 10 people in Haiti (5)
2. Powerful winds and lashing rain pounds the Yucatan peninsula (1)
3. 22,000 tourists and residents are evacuated (2 and 6)
4. 1600 people spend the night on mattresses in a shelter in Cancun (7)
5. Hurricane will send a three-metre surge of water over Mexico's "Maya Riviera" (4)
6. Hurricane will strike densely populated Southern Florida (3)

The central event, the event that is happening *now*, on the day of publication, leads the story, and is thereby treated as the most important item of information, more important for instance than what happened in Haiti a few days earlier. Such a central event must have an "angle". It must be newsworthy (cf. Bell 1991: 156-160): recent, urgent, unexpected, relevant to the readers' interests (as construed by the newspaper), and, in some sense, "bad news", an event which threatens to "destabilise the social order" (Iedema, Feez and White 1994: 107). But there is a practical reason for starting with the whole of the most important event as well. It allows copy editors to fit the stories on the newspaper pages by taking as many paragraphs from the end as needed: the information in a newspaper story is presented in descending order of importance, with the least important details kept to the end of the story, according to the principle of the "inverted pyramid".

Still, although news stories focus on a single central event, they tie it in with many other events. For instance, in the "Hurricane Wilma" story, the central event is the storm in "Mexico's top tourist destination" and its effect on (Western) tourists. But, as has been pointed out by Allan Bell (1991), other events are related to it in a number of ways:

1 Background

Earlier events can serve as "background" or "context". As defined by Bell (1991: 170):

The category of "background" covers any events prior to the current action. These are classed as "previous episodes" if they are comparatively recent. They probably figured as news stories in their own right at an earlier stage of the situation. If the background goes beyond the near past, it is classed as "history".

An example from the Hurricane Wilma story:

"It [Hurricane Wilma] killed 10 people in mudslides in Haiti earlier in the week".

2 Follow-up

Follow-up "covers any action subsequent to the main action of an event" and also includes reactions. It is therefore a "prime source for subsequent updating stories" (Bell 1991: 170), and journalists intending to keep a story alive will ensure that they include some follow-up. An example of "follow-up" from the Hurricane Wilma story:

"The category four hurricane is likely to strike densely populated southern Florida late tomorrow."

3 Commentary

Commentary "provides the journalist's or news actor's observations on the action" (Bell 1991: 170). It may be realized by explicit evaluation (e.g., in the "Hurricane Wilma" story, "described by forecasters as extremely dangerous"), or, for example, by comparisons with previous events. The latter happens extensively in the "Hurricane Wilma" story, as already indicated by the headline "Hurricane's fury echoes that of Katrina official" – the "official" in question was the only Federal Emergency Management Agency employee present in New Orleans when Katrina hit, and the writer of the piece uses the comparison to suggest that the authorities are once again badly prepared for the new emergency in Southern Florida.

4 Details

As Iedema, Feez and White (1994) have pointed out, the same event may be re-told a number of times, each new re-telling adding further detail, for instance:

Thousands of tourists went to ground in shelters to escape (...)

Mexican authorities said yesterday nearly 22,000 tourists and residents had to be evacuated from low-lying coastal areas (...)

In one gymnasium shelter in Cancun, 1600 people spent Thursday night on mattresses (...)

Extending this term also to what Bell (1991) calls "background" and "follow-up", they called the central event the "nucleus" and these details "satellites"; "Each satellite provides a new set of details about the 'crisis' event, including details about the past or details about the consequences" (Iedema, Feez and White 1994: 168). They represent this diagrammatically as shown in Figure 1, which models the structure of a news story about a car crash:

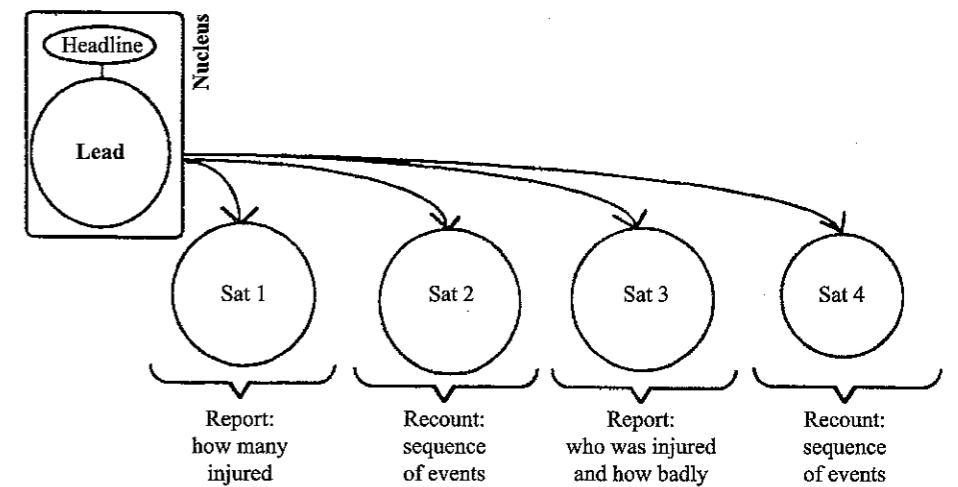


Figure 1. Nucleus-Satellite Structure (from Iedema, Feez and White 1994: 104)

In all these ways, then, news stories "knit diverse events together" (Iedema, Feez and White 1994: 168), and the "Hurricane Wilma" story, much as it may be built around a single central event, nevertheless ties this event to other events that happened, are happening, or are predicted to happen, in New Orleans, Washington, Haiti, Cancun and Florida.

We can now summarize our analysis of the "Hurricane Wilma" story (the italicized items show how orientations and evaluations are tucked into the narrative clauses in various ways, rather than featuring as separate stages):

Powerful winds and lashing rain pounded the Yucatan Peninsula, one of Mexico's top tourist destinations, as thousands of tourists went to ground in shelters to escape a weakening-then-strengthening Hurricane Wilma	<i>Establishing central event (1)</i> <i>Orientation</i> <i>Establishing central event (2)</i>
The category four hurricane is likely to strike densely populated Southern Florida late tomorrow	<i>Predicting follow-up event (b)</i> <i>Orientation</i>
Described by forecasters as extremely dangerous, Wilma was expected to send a three-metre surge of water over Mexico's "Maya Riviera" early this morning	<i>Evaluation (commentary)</i> <i>Predicting follow-up event (a)</i>

It killed ten people in mudslides in Haiti earlier this week *Contextualizing by means of "background" event*

Mexican authorities said yesterday nearly 22,000 tourists and residents had to be evacuated from low-lying coastal areas *Elaborating central event in more detail*

In one gymnasium shelter in Cancun, 1600 people spent Thursday night on mattresses *Further elaborating central event*

5. Types of news stories

Many news stories (or parts of news stories) deal with opinions rather than events. Such stories often have a double structure. They are at once a narrative, a "story", a report, an expository, an "argument". This is possible because, in journalism, all opinions must be "attributed", to signify that they are the opinions of spokespeople, and not of the journalist him or herself. So from the point of view of what is conveyed by the "projecting" clauses ("he said", "Mr Bush said", etc.), the story is simply a report of what one or several spokespeople said, again presented in order of importance rather than chronologically (as shown in the left half of the example below). But from the point of view of the "projected" clauses (the reported or quoted utterances), judicious editing can turn the story into a logical argument (as shown in the right half of the example below (the example is from the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 October 2005: 15):

Report structure PLUS Argument structure

<i>Event</i>	he [Mr Bush] said	"Israel should not undertake any activity that contravenes its roadmap obligations".	<i>Warning</i>
<i>Next event</i>	he added that	Israel would be "held to account for any actions that hampered the peace process".	<i>Reason</i>
<i>Next event</i>	Mr Abbas said	Israel should stop settlement building on the West Bank	<i>Similar warning</i>
		if it wanted to foster an "atmosphere for peace".	<i>Condition</i>

Next event he said "Peace and security cannot be guaranteed by the construction of walls, by the erection of checkpoints and the confiscation of land, but rather by the recognition of rights". *Reason*

So far I have discussed three media story genres: a magazine feature genre which follows the classical "complication-resolution" pattern, and the hard news "action story" and "opinion story" formats. But there are further genres of news story. The two fundamental elements of the "human interest story", for instance, as analyzed by Iedema, Feez and White (1994), are (1) the chronological narrative or *incident* which opens the story and may be preceded by an abstract and orientation and followed by details that elaborate the orientation and the incident, and (2) the *interpretation*. Their example is a story about a woman who "grew up in a close, caring and supportive family", but became a heroin addict and ended up holding up a corner shop armed with a syringe.

Abstract After years of upheaval, Keris Hodge seemed to be finally getting her life back on track.

Orientation She had been free of heroin for three years, her methadone was gradually being reduced and she was working at the job she liked best: nursing in an old people's home.

Incident But then she injured her back carrying a patient and was prescribed Normison for the pain. Within days Keris was addicted. Five months later, she was holding up an all-night supermarket in Enmore, threatening the cashier with a syringe. Keris Hodge who will be 30 tomorrow is now serving a four-year jail term, for armed robbery. The District Court judge who imposed the sentence this week, Judge Court, said that in "this era of AIDS" a syringe is as terrifying a weapon as a knife.

The "interpretation" that concludes the story has the "double structure" described above, as shown by the following short excerpt:

<i>Event</i>	Judge Court described it as	a crime with very serious overtones'	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>Next event</i>	he said	she should get a full-time jail term	<i>Result</i>
		to reinforce the notion of deterrence (...)	<i>Purpose</i>

It follows that the "human interest" story is "not a collection of facts around a central event", like the hard news story, but a story that focuses on how particular events came about, on how someone who "grew up in a close, caring and supportive family" could end up in jail (Iedema, Feez and White 1994: 144)

Van Leeuwen (1987) focuses on a story from the Australian *Daily Mirror* (24/1/1984) interpreting it as an advice column in the form of a news story. Today, when much newsprint is devoted to "lifestyle" stories, such mixtures of news and advice are becoming an increasingly important genre. This particular example is a piece of parental advice which appeared on the first day of the new school year, and opened with a mini-narrative, in order, perhaps, to entice the reader into the story and to provide a small measure of "human interest":

"When Mum first took me to school I started to cry because I thought I would never see her again. But after a few days I really loved school." – Mark, aged six.

It then moved into an "opinion story" in which a child psychologist explained that children might be anxious about "the first day" and that "preparation" is the answer to the problem:

		The first day at school can be a happy and a memorable one,	<i>Statement</i>
<i>Event</i>	Valerie said,	But the secret is to get ready and preparing now.	<i>Condition</i>
<i>Next event</i>	Valerie said	the main problems for new pupils were separation from families, meeting large numbers of children they didn't know and conforming to a classroom situation.	<i>Reason</i>

Finally it became "hortatory", to use Longacre's (1974) term, providing a set of "first day" do's and don'ts for parents. But the advice was still attributed to the child psychologist and therefore still read like a news story:

<i>Event</i>	Valerie says	it is important your child knows how to use and flush a toilet, ask for things clearly say his or her name and address.	<i>Suggestions</i>
		On the first day it is important not to rush children.	<i>Suggestion</i>

Next event Valerie says give them plenty of time to get ready, eat breakfast and wash and clean their teeth (...)

Clearly such "news" stories *do* have a beginning, a middle and an end, and do progress, step by step, towards a conclusions such as this one:

"And finally don't worry if you or your child cries", Valerie says. "It won't last long".

Equally clearly, they mix different genres – news and advice column, narrative, exposition and procedure. Texts are rarely "pure" in terms of genre, and perhaps it is better to think of genres as resources we use to create strategies for achieving social goals of various kind, or, from the point of view of analysis, as *reference points* for analysis, rather than as schemas in which texts can be expected to fit neatly.

6. The procedural turn

Ever since the beginnings of speech act theory, the main emphasis in the study of language and text has shifted from meaning to action. The growth of genre theory has been part of this "procedural turn". Genres as defined in this tradition, and therefore also in this chapter, are conceived of as (inter)actional *formats* that can accommodate an ever widening range of discourses, and as strategies for achieving objectives, rather than, for instance, as resources for negotiation. Today this concept of genre is used, not only in text analysis, but also in text design, for instance by the designers of software (Powerpoint is a key example), the scripts used by call centre operators and other service workers (cf. Cameron 2000), and so on.

The superseding of genre over discourse (as that term is used in this chapter) can in principle lead to a new form of social cohesion-in-diversity, a form in which it no longer matters that people believe different things, so long as they *do* more or less the same things. Universities are a good example of this principle. In universities many different and often contradictory truths can be taught. This poses no threat to the cohesion of the institution, so long as these truths are all delivered and examined in the same formats, subject to the same ritualized quality assessment procedures, and so on – so long as we all *do* the same things in increasingly homogeneous ways.

The same principle also allows us to be at once local and heterogeneous, and global and homogeneous. In a series of studies of the global magazine *Cosmopolitan*, Machin and van Leeuwen (e.g. 2003, 2004) described how different

versions of the magazine used different discourses of women's work. The Dutch version, for instance, was oriented towards employees taking personal responsibility for their work, and working for the sake of job satisfaction rather than material rewards, while the Indian version was oriented towards working for status and material rewards. In the Indian version women had high status occupations, while in the Spanish and Greek versions they tended to be office workers with male bosses. The point is, all these versions were framed in the same "problem-solution" genre, as practical solutions to common problems, endorsed by psychological truths about human nature, and therefore as transcending cultural differences and legitimately "global".

This example shows that genres are not neutral containers for different discourses. The problem-solution format encountered in *Cosmopolitan*, for instance, carries a message of its own. It

suggests a world in which there can be no solidarity with fellow human beings, no counsel from cultural and religious traditions, and no structural and political problems that can be addressed by collective political action. Instead it is all up to the individual. Each problem must be faced alone, and solved by means of the rational survival strategies sold by the global church of the corporate media in the way passports to heaven were once sold by the Catholic Church. (Machin and van Leeuwen 2004: 118)

Clearly genre is a highly important phenomenon in today's society, a prime example of Foucault's "microphysics of power" (see e.g. 1977, 1980). But it should be studied alongside discourse and style, and *critically*, with an eye for its social impact and its uses in social control, rather than only procedurally and "technically", for in that case it will inevitably contribute to an increasing homogeneity of generic practices and the increasing superseding of procedure over meaning, whether the analyst is aware of it or not.

Note

It should be pointed out that this chapter does not deal with issues of the reception and comprehension of news. Fairclough (1995) discusses the issue of the diverse possible readings of media texts, an issue which has played an important role in the field of media studies, and van Dijk (1988) relates schematic structures such as the ones discussed in this chapter to comprehension.

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16. Specific genre features of new mass media

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1. Introduction

During the last fifteen years, the boost of information technology has had a far reaching cultural and social impact. Computer technology and the development of the internet play the main role in this technological revolution, but mobile telephone services have an ever increasing part in this development process. Together they represent what has been called the “new media” during the last decade.

The new information technologies offer not only the appropriate technological means for meeting the needs of the globalised information society, they also symbolise all the relevant features we associate with 21st century society: decentralisation, interactivity, multi-modality, transnationality and transculturality (Münker and Roesler 1997). Like the invention of any new technology of writing, the new media have had a tremendous effect on communicative and discursive practices and have fostered the emergence of new communicative styles and genres (Bolter 1997).

These communicative and discursive practices and their effects on the public sphere will be the main focus of this contribution, in which I will deal with the following forms of communication: hypertext, e-mail, internet relay chat (IRC), and telephone text messages.

In the first part of the remainder of this chapter, each of the four forms of communication will be characterised and their commonalities and differences will be discussed. In the following four sections I will discuss linguistic and communicative characteristics of each of the four forms of communication. For reasons of space it is impossible to present and analyse examples of each of the discussed forms of communication, therefore every section contains references to publications which present sample analyses. In the closing section, I will sum up various consequences of the communicative forms and genres in the new media and try to provide some general conclusions.

2. Forms of communication in the new media

2.1. General characteristics

Following Holly (1997), I distinguish between types of media, communicative forms, and genres. Holly suggests using the term “medium” for an array of communicative possibilities which are characterised by: