Notes for Norman Fairclough's *Analysing Discourse*

(Version 3)

Chapter 4: Genres and Generic Structure

Introduction

65A **<u>Definition: Genre</u> = 'the specifically discoursal aspect of ways of acting and interacting in the course of social events'**

66A This is a (rather unclear) six-point summary of the discussion of genres from Chapter 2. [repeated from p. 38]

1. The *range* of actions and interactions (including linguistic actions: that is, genres) that are possible in a social event is *limited* by the social practices that the social event is influenced by, and the way in which those social practices are networked together.
[Of course, at a higher level of abstraction, the range of social practices is limited by social structures, including language: see 23C]

2. New Capitalism involves changes to the networking of social practices. This leads to changes in the possible forms of actions and interactions, including changes in genres.

3. Genres vary in *scale*, from small local ones to big global ones.

4. New genres are created by *combining* existing genres in new ways.

5. Genre Chains: Social events are associated with particular genres. Events are connected to each other in chains. These event chains involve corresponding genre chains.

6. Genre Mixing (or 'hybridity'): Examples of texts that comprise a single pure genre are rare. Usually, texts involve a combination of different genres.

66B When we study genres, we should begin by studying genre chains, then genre mixtures, then individual genres.

Q. I cannot understand why NF says this. Can you? For, example, what is wrong with starting from the other end, from studying individual genres?

66C Genre chains and genre mixtures were studied in Chapter 2. This chapter focuses in detail on individual genres.

66D Genres vary: some are fixed and stable, others are in a state of change.

66E The names that people give to genres (e.g. 'seminar', 'interview') are not very precise terms.

Genres and texts

67A NF's approach to the analysis of texts is a *relational* one. [see p.35] Actually, I think a better name for his approach would be *realizational* because the key feature seems to be that there are various *levels* of text organization, and the choices made (by text producers) at higher levels (the meanings they want to express) get *realized* through choices made at lower levels (the grammar and vocabulary 'forms' they use).

Specifically, in this chapter, NF is looking at how the **interdiscursive** aspect of texts (that is the relations between discourses, genres and styles [see 37B]) are realized in semantic, grammatical and **lexical** (= vocabulary) features of texts.

Genres are *primarily* realized by **Actional** meanings and forms
Discourses are *primarily* realized by **Representational** meanings and forms
Styles are *primarily* realized by **Identificational** meanings and forms   [see pp. 26-28]

67B Genre is *primarily* realized by the following features of texts [I have re-arranged these a little]:

Text Level	The overall 'generic' pattern of organization of the text. [Ch 4]
	The mode of intertextuality of a text: how other 'voices' are included. [Ch 4]
Above Clause Level	Semantic relations between clauses, sentences and paragraphs. [Ch 5]
	Formal grammatical relations between clauses and sentences. [Ch 5]
Clause Level	Types of exchange, speech function, grammatical mood [see Ch 6]

67C This chapter is about analyzing genres, but it connects this analysis to seven **social research themes**:

1. **Anthony Giddens**' studies of **globalisation** and the concept of '**disembedding**' of social material. As an example of this phenomenon, genres can be disembedded too.
2. **Jurgen Habermas**' studies of the difference between '**communicative**' and '**strategic**' **action**. This difference is connected to the relationship between genres and social goals.
3. **Barbara Misztal**'s studies of '**societal infomalisation**'. She thinks modern society is becoming more informal. The 'conversationalisation' of public discourse is an example of this wider trend.
4. '**Public sphere**' research. This is related to dialogue.
5. Social change and **technological change**: development of new communications technology (the Internet) has produced new genres.
6. **Ideology** research. This is related to the idea that argument is a kind of genre.
7. **News narratives**

68A In this chapter, NF will (1) outline a framework for the analysis of genres, and then (2) examine three types of genre and their relation to social research themes: **dialogue** (and public space), **argument** (and citizenship) and **narrative** (and ideology in the news media).

Pre-genres, disembedded genres, and situated genres

68B It is difficult to define what the word 'genre' means because we can define it on various different levels of abstraction. NF *seems* to want to define the term narrowly, thus:

Genre = discourse that is *connected to a specific social practice* (or network of practices). [but see 69A]

Therefore, he prefers the term '**pre-genre**' for more general, abstract things such as **narrative**, **argument** and **description**.

68C However, between the levels of pre-genre and genre there is an *intermediate level* of discourse which NF calls '**disembedded genre**'. Examples of this include **interviews** and the town and city **self-publicising (infomercial) genre** used in Ex 2 by the Hungarian town.
Here NF is applying Giddens' sociological concept of *disembedding* to discourse. Genres can be taken out of their context (network of social practices) where they were originally developed and transferred to various other contexts and other scales (more local or more global). NF thinks that this process of disembedding genres is part of the **restructuring** and **rescaling** of social life that characterize the new capitalism.

69A Here, NF introduces the new term **'situated genre'** for genres that are specific to particular networks of practices such as 'ethnographic interview' like the one in Ex 1.

Thus, we have:

Types of Genre		
Abstract	**Pre-genre**	**narrative, argument, description**
	Disembedded genre	**interview, civic self-publishing infomercial**
Specific	**Situated genre**	**ethnographic interview**

69B Texts are rarely written 'in' only one particular genre. Because texts often contain mixtures of different genres (genre hybridity) it is unlikely that we can find situated genres existing purely on their own in particular texts. Rather, text producers make creative use of the various genres that are available in a certain social context. In other words, 'the genres associated with a particular network of social practices constitute a **<u>potential</u>** which is variably drawn upon in <u>actual</u> texts and interactions.'

NOTE: The very general idea of something being 'a potential' which other things can 'draw upon' is important in various fields of research, including sociology, psychology, ecology and cognitive science. It is also very important in the sort of Functional Linguistics that NF prefers. This is because Functional Linguistics emphasises the importance of meaningful **choice** (another keyword!) for text-producers when they *select* certain linguistic/grammatical options rather than others when making their texts. The choice, for example, between using an active or a passive sentence: *John kicked the dog* vs. *The dog was kicked by John* is a meaningful choice: the former answers the question, *What did John do?* The latter answers the question, *What happened to the dog?* We can only make such choices because of the language system as a whole constitutes a *potential*. In certain situations (certain networks of social practices) the potential is limited in various ways, and consequently our choices are limited too. For example, at a traditional Christian-style wedding ceremony, when the priest asks the bride if she is willing to marry the groom, there are only really two things she can say: 'yes' or 'no', and saying no in such a situation is highly unusual!

69C One kind of genre hybridity is formats [see pp. 34-35 for other kinds]. **Formats** are texts that are 'assemblies of different texts involving different genres.' NF says that Internet websites, such as the one of the anti-globalisation network 'Reclaim the Streets', are examples of formats because various things are being done (actions) through words (genres) in the various parts of the website.
70A Another kind of genre hybridity is that texts may contain a **hierarchy** of genres. They may have a **main genre** and one or more **sub-genres**. In Ex 1 the main genre is ethnographic interview but within it the manager's speech contains elements of narrative and argument.

Analysing individual genres
70B NF says that genres can be analysed in three ways:
1. **Activity**: what are people doing (discoursally)?
2. **Social Relations**: what are their social relations?
3. **Communication Technology**: what technology does the activity depend on?

(1) Activity
70C Discourse might have a primary role in the overall social event (e.g. in a lecture) or just an ancilliary (assisting) role (e.g. in a football match). This is a matter of degree.

70D Genres are often defined (and named) according to the **purpose** of the activity. This is the traditional *linguistic* view of genres. But this is not such a good way to define them. One problem is that some genres may have more than one purpose and these different purposes may be hierarchically ordered.

71A The ethnographic interview genre shown in Ex 1 has a hierarchy of purposes. By looking at such hierarchies of purpose we can notice what role a text has within a network of social practices.

71B We should not assume that all genres can best be defined according to purpose. For example, the genre of **chatting** to friends does not seem to be as '**purpose-driven**' as the genre of interview. This is related to the influential German social theorist, Jurgen Habermas's distinction of two different kinds of social action:

> **Communicative (inter)action**: oriented to arriving at *understanding*
> **Strategic (inter)action**: oriented to getting *results*

Habermas studies 'the modernization of social life' in complex developed capitalist societies such as Germany, Japan, England, etc. He says different kinds of societies (and different parts of individual societies) function according to different types of **rationality**. He describes the rationality of the 'systems' of state and the economy in advanced capitalist societies as **instrumental**. He does not like this. Instrumental rationality leads to mainly strategic kinds of interaction (making people do things, efficiency) and connected with these strategic interactions there are many purpose-driven genres. NF does not like these. On the other hand, Habermas contrasts this official, public side of advanced capitalist societies with what he calls the '**lifeworld**', the world of daily life of ordinary people. He likes this. Although the lifeworld has been colonized by the instrumental rationality of the systems (that is, people's lives are more and more controlled by the officialdom and the power of business), it still retains some of its old communicative rationality. Communicative rationality leads to communicative interactions and hence to genres which are not so determinate or purpose-driven.

72A Sometimes communication involves a combination of communicative and strategic interaction. For example, the '*apparent* informal chattiness' of interactions between service industry staff and their customers (e.g. staff at MacDonald's saying 'Have a nice day') may be strategically motivated by the company.

72B Conclusion: Genres vary in their degree of purpose-driven-ness.

Generic Structure

72C As we have seen, the traditional linguistic view of genres is that they are purpose-driven forms of interaction. Following from this, linguists tend to regarding '**staging**' in genres as very important. Staging means the way that a text is divided into parts (the generic structure). The more **ritualized** (or standardized) an interaction type is, the more likely it is to show this kind of staged generic structure. For example, papers in scientific journals often have a fairly standard generic structure consisting, in order, of: Title + Abstract + Introduction + Methods + Results + Conclusion + References. On the other hand, they do not (usually!) include, for example, Poem, Joke, or Love Letter sections! In some genres, some elements (and their order of occurrence) may be **obligatory** and other elements may be optional.

72D Conclusion: when we analyse texts in terms of genre we should look for staging but not always expect to find it. Staging is related to ritualization. In new capitalism, organizations try to control their workers and customers through ritualization of interactions. They teach ritualization through **training** (NF does not like training). Deborah Cameron (a very interesting feminist CDA scholar) studied staff training in telephone 'call centres'. [For NF and many other critical scholars, such call centers are a symbol of everything that is bad about new capitalism: that is why for example Cameron calls them 'communication factories'.]

72D+* A memo from management to staff in a call center telling the staff how to speak to customers.

73A Cameron found that the way that staff in call centres use language is highly controlled by the company. In new capitalism in general, *communication is becoming **commodified** and industrialized* (NF dislikes this). This trend is related to the contemporary focus on '**skills**' and 'training' in education (which NF also dislikes).

73B Generic structure example 1: **Accident Report** from a newspaper (about a fire at a factory)

74A Headline (summary) + Lead Paragraph (summary) + Satellites (details) + Wrap Up (outcome)

74B Generic structure example 2: **Sales Encounter** (shopping transaction)

74C C: Sales Request + V: Sale Compliance + Bid for Further Sale + C: Rejection + V: Payment Request + C: Payment Compliance + V: Giving Change + Thanks

75A Even quite ritualized interactions like these examples show a lot of variation in terms of generic structure. So it is not surprising that less ritualized texts often do not show any clear structure. For example, Ex 2. 'Infomercial' for a town in Hungary

75B Generic structure is related to dialogues, narrative and argument [see 81B]

(2) Social Relations

75C Genres, as forms of interaction, constitute social relations between interactants (social agents) such as organizations, groups or individuals. In their classic paper 'The pronouns of power and solidarity', two sociolinguists, R. **Brown** and A. **Gilman**, claim that social relations vary in two dimensions: **power** (social hierarchy) and **solidarity** (social distance/intimacy). NF is interested in the way that social hierarchy and social distance are **construed** in genres in modern society.

75D For example, communication between organizations (governments, advertisers) and individuals is characterized by high levels of hierarchy (organizations have a lot of power, individuals do not) and social distance (organizations are increasingly global, individuals are always local). This kind of unequal communication is a feature of new capitalism. But it has two risks for organizations because of problems of the **legitimacy** (of their control) and **alienation** (of the individuals who are being controlled). Organizations try to avoid these risks by communicating with individuals in ways which 'simulate' friendly social relations but which mystify (hide) the reality of social hierarchy and distance.

76A Ex 7 is an example of this. It is from the 'interactive' website of the World Economic Forum (a club for rich business people that is often criticized by anti-globalization protestors). The website contains three parts: (1) a summary of their meeting; (2) quotations from the meeting; (3) a selection of emails sent to them by individuals (selected by the WEF themselves).

NF doubts that just including some (selected by WEF) emails really makes the website 'interactive'. He thinks it is just *simulating* friendly social relations between the WEF and individuals.

76B Ex 5. Tony Blair's Anti-Terrorism speech. NF thinks that Blair's use of phrases like 'I realize …' and 'I understand ..' is an example of an organization (the government) deliberately trying to simulate person-to-person interaction to increase the government's legitimacy and reduce the people's feelings of alienation. This is part of what NF calls the **conversationalisation** of public discourse.

Ex 11 Government 'Consultation' Paper on Education. The authors use 'we' and everyday expressions such as 'ways of doing things' to reduce the feeling of hierarchy and distance between government and people.

76C Ex 1 Ethnographic Interview with factory manager. This is ambivalent. On the one hand, the good point is that it is a way of reducing the distance between organizations (in this case, universities) and ordinary people (factory managers). On the other hand, the bad point is that, if we regard academic social research as part of the **apparatus of governance**, then it can be seen as a way of mystifying social hierarchy and distance.

(3) Communications Technologies

77A Discourse can be either one-way or two-way, and it can be either mediated or non-mediated. This gives rise to four types of discourse:

	One-way	**Two-way**
Mediated	Print, Radio, TV, Film, Internet	Telephone, Email
Non-Mediated	Lecture	Face-to-face conversation

77B The development of new communications technologies goes along with the development of new genres.

77C An example of this co-development of technology and genre is web page '**formats**' such as Ex. 7, the extracts from the World Economic Forum website. [see 69C]

One aspect of the newness of this web page's format is its particular type of **multimodality**.

[The book NF refers to, *Multimodal Discourse: the modes and media of contemporary discourse*, 2001 by Gunther **Kress** and Theo **van Leeuwen** is a brilliant application of Michael Halliday's version of Systemic-Functional Grammar to visual images.]

When we analyse genres, we should ask: *which* semiotic modalities (language, images, sounds etc.) are drawn on and *how* they are combined.

The website genre is interesting in being non-sequential and interactive. However, it is not *totally* interactive: the design offers options, but also limits them.

78A There is a close relationship between (i) the economic, political and social changes of new capitalism, (ii) technological change (especially mediation via new communication technology) and (iii) genre.

Dialogue and the public sphere

78B NOTE: Dialogue is one of NF's favourite words!

Dialogue *should* be free and equal. This is the ideal. Informal conversation is a very basic type of dialogue. In reality, even informal conversation between friends can show inequalities due to unequal social relations. For example, between men and women, men interrupt women more than women interrupt men.

78C **Five ideal characteristics of dialogue**. [see also 80A*]

All participants should have equal rights to:
  1. take turns to speak
  2. use turns to act in various ways (questioning, requesting, complaining, etc.)
  3. speak without interruption
  4. select and change topics
  5. offer interpretations or summaries of what has been said

[One other characteristic which NF included in his original manuscript of this book but which is not included here is: '6. correct or 'repair' what other participants say'.]

79A Dialogue in real situations (such as in institutions like companies, governments etc.) is often not equal regarding these rights. In job interviews for example, the interviewee cannot usually ask any difficult questions or interrupt, etc.

79B <u>**Definition: Public Sphere**</u> = **'the domain of social life in which people can engage as citizens in deliberating (= thinking carefully) about issues of social and political concern, in a way which can feed into policy making' … 'an effective public sphere can be defined in terms of the quality of dialogue which takes place within it'.**

NF worries that the new capitalism is destroying democracy and the public sphere.

79C In modern (new capitalist) politics, words like 'dialogue', 'deliberation', 'consultation', and 'partnership' have become keywords. But NF doubts that politicians are really interested in these things, or in democracy. He is skeptical about the value of the various new forms of public dialogue such as 'focus groups' and 'citizens' panels'.

80A In two of his previous works, NF has tried to evaluate examples of public sphere discourse by comparing them with a set (or 'template') of five normative (or 'ideal') features:

  (a) people should be able to decide to enter a dialogue, and they should be able to leave it and re-enter it later.

  (b) all people should be able to enter a dialogue and to participate in it equally

  (c) people should be able to disagree with each other and different opinions should be permitted.

  (d) there should be chances for people to reach a consensus and to make alliances with each other.

  (e) the dialogue should lead to practical action to improve society.

80B Ex 8, the television 'debate' on the future of the British monarchy (Royal Family) [see 44A]. NF thinks this was far from being an ideal example of true public sphere dialogue. For example, participation was not free to anyone, it was just a short, one-time only event and the participants did not have equal rights to speak.

81A NF is skeptical about government 'consultation' of the public about controversial issues (such as has been taking place in Britain recently about genetically-modified organisms (GMO) or food (GM food)). He does not think this kind of consultation is an example of 'real dialogue' either.

Argument, assumptions and ideologies

NOTE: In this section, the word 'argument' is used formally to mean 'the reasons that somebody gives to explain why something is true or false, right or wrong, good or bad'. It does not mean 'disagreement' or 'fight'. In 82C, NF calls these, respectively, '**monological**' and '**dialogical**'.

81B The philosopher Stephen **Toulmin** defined arguments as containing four parts:

  Grounds: the premises of the argument

  Warrants: the things that justify the inference from the Grounds to the Claim

  Backing: something that gives support to a warrant

  Claim: the conclusion of the argument

Ex. 7 World Economic Forum website. 'How can Globalization Deliver the Goods: The View from the South'. NF analyses this at two levels:

  (i) Macro Level: Logical Structure of argument

  (ii) Micro Level: Texture of argument [see 82A]

1. Macro Level: Logical Structure of argument. The text has two main arguments that are mixed together.

Main Argument 1:

  Grounds: Globalisation is often not 'delivering the goods' (= providing benefits) in the South (= the poor countries of the world).

  Warrant: Globalisation *will* deliver the goods *if* changes are made in national and global governance.

  Backing: Globalisation *can* deliver the goods. *<< Only assumed, not explicitly stated <<*

Therefore,

  Claim: Changes *should* be made in global and national governance.

Main Argument 2:

  Grounds: Globalisation is often perceived in the South in terms of social challenges rather than economic opportunities.

  Warrant: Perceptions can be changed through organisational change (change in governance).

Therefore,

  Claim: Changes *should* be made in global and national governance.

The mixture of these two arguments makes the overall meaning of the article ambiguous. Is it about how to make globalisation *really* work for the South, or just about how to make it *seem* to work?

81C When we try to analyse arguments, a common problem is that parts of the argument may be only assumed, implied, taken for granted. For example, the Backing for Argument 1 is only assumed. Assumptions in texts are often questionable or doubtful. Such assumptions are often ideological and are related to specific discourses (in this case the neo-liberal discourse of globalisation.) which try to make their view of the world seem like just 'common sense'.

2. Micro Level: Texture of argument

82A Voice. Whose voice is represented in the text? Is the writer (or writers) (i) reporting on the arguments of others (from the South) in a debate on globalisation, or (ii) making his or her (or their) own arguments, or (iii) both? NF thinks it is doing both, so its genre is ambivalent, a mixture of **report** and **exposition**.

82B Paragraph 4 is about the theme of 'Cultural homogenization'. The text has many ambivalent or unclear sections where it is very difficult to know exactly whose arguments are being expressed. Para 4 is a good example of this.

82C We can analyse monological arguments in a dialogical way, by trying to identify the **protagonists** and **antagonists** that are involved in them. But in this text, again, is not easy to do this. Perhaps this is a deliberate strategy of the writer(s) because they don't want to make it clear what their point of view is.

83A Paragraph 5 is about Ghana, the West African country. Again here the protagonists are unidentified, but the argument implies a neo-liberal pro-globalization point of view.

As for the micro-structure of the texture of this text, the final two paragraphs contain the clearest examples of the Claims of Main Arguments 1 and 2. So, as for the macro-structure of the text, we can see the text as a whole as leading up to these key Claims.

83B This text seems to be obfuscating or suppressing difference [see 41B* -- scenario (e)]

Narrative [as seen in news stories]

83C Bal (1997) analyses narratives in terms of three aspects: **fabula**, **story** and **narrative text**.

Fabula = the 'material or content that is worked into the story', a 'series of *logically* and *chronologically* related events'

Story = a fabula that is 'presented in a certain manner'. This includes the arrangement of the description of events into a sequence which may differ from the real chronological order (e.g. by using 'flashbacks'), transforming social agents into '**characters**', and '**focalizing**' the story according to a certain '**point of view**'.

Narrative text. The same story can appear in various narrative texts, with various narrators using various different media (conversation, radio news story, film, etc.).

83D In this section, NF considers the narrative structure of news stories using this framework. First, the 'Firemen Tackle Blaze' local newspaper story.

84A **Fabula**

1. *First,* a fire broke out, (which caused, and carried on causing, damage until it was put out)
2. *and then …* workers were evacuated from the building,
3. *and then …* firemen tackled the flames, (and successfully put out the fire)
4. *and then …* the department was running again the next morning.

Story

The sequence is [with the fabula events shown in brackets]: Headline (3 – 1), Lead Para (2 – 1), Second Para (3 – 1), Third Para (Damage), Wrap-Up Para (4).

This sequence focalizes the story in terms of the *response* to the fire and the restoration of reality afterwards, rather than the fire itself. This pattern is a common feature of the Accident Report genre.

84B **News** = **creating *stories* out of *fabula*.**

We can think of news as being a form of **social regulation**, or even a form of symbolic **violence**, because of the way that it imposes **narrative order** on the fuzzy reality of events. Producing news stories involves **construing** the fuzzy complexity of reality as a sequence of distinct events, (for example, by including some happenings and excluding others) and representing events as having a particular relationship to each other (which they may not 'really' have). Thus, making news stories involves a lot of interpretation and construction. Making news is *not* just a matter of reporting 'the facts'. [Although this is a very powerful myth, popular among professional journalists in particular!] News narratives have two kinds of 'intentions'.

Referential intention = trying to make an accurate connection between the story and the real events.

Explanatory intention = trying to make sense of the events by *focalizing* them according to a certain point of view.

News media are part of **the apparatus of government** [see 24A]. News stories regulate and control events, and the ways in which people respond to them.

85A Ex. 6, the 'Lockerbie Bombing' radio news story. This story's fabula is mainly speech events (what various people said).

NOTE: This fabula structure is very common in news stories. So much news these days is just about what (usually powerful) people have *said* rather than what has *happened*. 'President Bush announced that ...', 'Tony Blair criticized …', 'In a speech last night, Prime Minister Koizumi said …'. This is one reason why people like NF think discourse is becoming a more important factor in modern life. Because so many people say so many things every day, journalists must select what to report. This need for **selectivity** contributes to the *focalization* of the story.

85B Genre Analysis of the Lockerbie Bombing radio news story. [NF doesn't talk about this in detail]

1. Activity (generic structure and purpose)

Generic structure: Radio news stories have a fairly clear generic structure, which is similar to newspaper news stories but also different because of the communication technology involved.

Purpose: Not clear. There is a hierarchy of purposes.

   (i) Surface Level: Telling people what has happened in the world.
   (ii) Deep Level: As an apparatus of government.

2. Social relations

   (i) Surface Level: Journalists giving information and audience.
   (ii) Deep Level: Rulers and the people who are ruled. We can think about (ii) by asking whose point of view is being expressed.

3. Communications technology

In TV news, how has the relationship between the verbal story and the visual images been changing? Are aesthetic values becoming more important in news production ('Don't worry about whether the story is true or not, just enjoy the amazing pictures and computer graphics!').

Summary

86B See it.   **END**