

Typologies in ESP: From Theory to Practice¹

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ABSTRACT

Text Typologies resulted from a need to map text studies. It is a reassuring feeling to be able to list and classify what you know. This idea was discovered a long time ago. Indeed we can trace text typologies as far back as Aristotle. Like Aristotle's, Bain's typology dating from the 19th century has been a beacon to many a rhetorician, composition teacher, and discourse analyst. In the span of a century, several other typologies have been proposed to systematize text studies. Two main schools have been active in this area: Research done on textsorte in German (Wolfgang Dressler; Rosemarie Glaser) and work done in English on text-types. In this paper I shall expound on the importance of text-typologies in ESP. As a theoretical springboard in the area of discourse analysis, devising typologies has been instrumental in clarifying content and more pragmatic pedagogical issues in the area of curriculum design.

KEYWORDS: Text typologies, Language for specific purposes, Foreign language.

RESUMEN

Las tipologías de texto son el resultado de una necesidad de organizar los trabajos sobre lingüística de texto. El poder listar y clasificar aquello que sabemos nos produce una sensación de seguridad. Esa idea se remonta a Aristóteles, quien nos dejó de regalo una pragmática tipología del texto. En este último siglo, Alexandre Bain, puede ser considerado como la gran referencia de los estudiosos de Retórica, Composición y Análisis de Discurso en esta área. En los tiempos más recientes, destacan dos escuelas principales: los trabajos realizados por alemanos, tales como Wolfgang Dressler y Rosemarie Glaser (sobre textsorte); y los trabajos en inglés (sobre text-types). En este artículo pongo de relieve la importancia de tipologías del texto en el estudio del inglés para fines específicos. Como si de una rampa de lanzamiento se tratara, las tipologías de texto son de gran importancia en el esclarecimiento de contenidos y aspectos más pragmáticos en el campo de la planificación curricular.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Tipologías de texto, Lenguas aplicadas, Lengua extranjera.

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I. INTRODUCTION

It gives a sense of security if you can list and classify what you know. That is probably the reason why text typologies have been the concern of man for a long time. We can trace text typologies as far back as Aristotle. A review of types in English reveals names, evoking different proponents, and serving different purposes at different ages. The need for text typologies has endured through the times. In a workshop on *The Burning Issues of Discourse* held in Italy in 1993 a few participants expressed the importance of typologies as a theoretical concern in the area of discourse (Kathleen Dahlgren, Elizabeth Maier, Patrizia Violi, Michael Zock) even if the issue was not directly elicited.

Hatim and Mason (1990:138) present the problem of typologies in a rather concise argument. «Some text types have been defined in such a broad way (as scientific, religious, journalistic) that they risk all possibilities of retaining any predictive value. When attempts are made at narrowing the focus of description, we might end up with virtually as many text types as there are texts.» This situation calls for a pragmatic view on typologies. Typologies should lend themselves to be adapted to each reality in particular. There may be no one good typology, but different kinds of good typologies serving different kinds of purposes.

It is my point of view that to even aim at reaching an only typology that might win a consensus and be accepted or useful to all areas is nonsense; nevertheless, it is worthwhile to devise one that may be valid even if it is for a limited purpose. As we trace a stumbling walk in defining terminology, the reader realizes what is at stake in the theory of typologies and discloses a way of defining an appropriate typology for LSP classes. The perspective in this paper is based on experience in designing and teaching LSP courses of business communication in English and Portuguese for areas such as secretarial, public relations, and international relations.

II. DEFINITION OF TYPES

For practical purposes in the field of LSP teaching and translation, types seem to be useful as working tools both for discourse analysis and for pedagogical purposes. The *Rhetoric* of Aristotle has been cherished for its scientific, philosophical, and pedagogical value. Aristotle classifies speech into three kinds : deliberative, forensic and epideictic. In turn, deliberative speech can be subdivided

into exhortation or dissuasion; the elements of forensic speech can be accusation or defence; epideictic speech is either intended to praise or **blame**. Deliberative speech is said to concern the future, forensic speech concerns the past, and epideictic speech belongs to the present. The ends of each kind of speech are **also** distinct. Deliberative speech aims at advantage or **injury**. Forensic speech aims at **justice** or injustice. The aim of those who praise or **blame** concerns honor or dishonor (Cooper, 1960: 17-8). **Aristotle's** typology is certainly well-founded and encompassing. It brings to mind much more recent typologies.

One of the most far-reaching aspects of Alexander Bain's work is said to be his typology of discourse. Bain separated discourse into different *forms*: description, narration, exposition, argument, and **later** poetry. Bain's **forms** of discourse were expounded in his book *English Composition and Rhetoric* intended for the student of rhetoric, which he taught at Aberdeen. This typology has persisted in composition textbooks (Horner, 1983: 146) and was recovered by Edward Corbett in a review of typologies addressed to the composition teacher. Corbett called his types *modes*, but they were basically Bain's **forms** revisited. Jakobson (1960) established a typology of language *functions* based on research by Malinowski. According to Jakobson, communication happens if a 'sender' delivers a message to an 'addressee' in a certain 'context,' using a certain common 'code' if a physical and psychological 'contact' can be established. Depending on the focus of the message in relation to these five elements of communication, glossed in the text, five functions of language can occur. Messages focussing on the writer or speaker are emotive; messages focussing on the reader are called conative; the message primarily focussed on the context is referential; the one having to do with the nature of the contact is phatic; the metalinguistic message **pertains** the code; the message focussed on itself is poetic. Jakobson's theory was applied to writing by Corbett and to reading by Jasper Neals alike as it has met the interest of many linguists.

Kinneavy **explains** his four *aims* of discourse as follows: «Language is like a window-pane. I may **throw** bricks at it to vent my feelings about something; I may use a **chunk** of it to chase away an **intruder**; I may use it to **mirror** and explore **reality**; and I may use a stained-glass window to **call** attention to itself as an **object** of beauty. Windows, like language, can be used expressively, persuasively, referentially and **esthetically**» (Kinneavy, 1981: 97). The overflowing aggressiveness in the passage unveils the purpose of his typology. The author is addressing a readership of composition teachers used to **motivate** students to **let** feelings out in

writing. In Kinneavy's review of typologies, he mentions another term for type, Hayakawa's *uses* of discourse, which are equivalent to Kinneavy's aims.

Longacre favours the term *type*. He is presenting a theoretical analysis of discourse in his book *An Anatomy of Speech Notions*. His typology neatly classifies discourse according to a set of distinctive **features** which are branded minus or plus.

Longacre precludes a deep structure and a surface structure in discourse. Four deep structure types are apparent depending on the value of **features** such as time, orientation, person, and type of **linkage**. His four deep structure types are narrative, procedural, expository, and hortatory (Longacre, 1976: 200). Longacre proceeds with a set of surface structure types. The whole idea of postulating a deep and a surface structure analysis is linguistically elegant, without a doubt. Longacre's surface structure is, however, far too deep to be **accessible** to the real student we encounter in our language courses, and that is why I shall return to this point **further** down.

Types are now viewed in the field of linguistics as two main entities: *registers* and *genres*. Halliday defines **register** in precise terms. He presents **register** as a semantic concept, defined as a configuration of meanings that are typically associated with a particular situational configuration of field, mode, and tenor. **Besides**, a **register** includes the expressions, the **lexico-grammatical** and phonological features, that **realize** its meanings. Hasan expounds on **genre**, which she defines by the set of obligatory elements of each **genre** (Halliday and Hasan: 1989).

Swales (1991) manages to 'disentangle' the concept of **register** from **genre** on the basis of different levels of analysis. He establishes the position of **genre** in linguistic studies, and he asserts the value of **genre** as fundamental to the realization of goals (Hatim and Mason, 1990: 41). Swales and Martin have done a great **deal** in showing the importance of **genre** both as a linguistic device and as a pedagogical tool. A few **genres** have been thoroughly studied such as the research paper (Dudley-Evans and Henderson 1993; Anna Maurannen 1993), and the doctor's appointment (Ainsworth-Vaughan 1993).

Genres have been applied to translation studies. Carl James in his article «**Genre analysis and translation**» explores the intertextual relations of **genres** in the **source** language and cross-linguistically. He establishes the importance of what he calls '**genre translation**.' Hatim and Mason are interested in types as guides to translation in a very practical sense. They **state** that texts are usually hybrid in nature. Then they go deep into seeking the essence of texts. They contend that texts should be **defined** as **units** which are variable in nature with a **certain dominance** of

a given purpose or *contextual focus*. They advocate that for the purpose of translation it is not enough to stop at *genre* typology. They *argue*: «although we recognize multifunctionality as an *important property* of texts, we submit that only one predominant rhetorical purpose can be served at one time in a given text. This is the text contextual focus» (1990:146). With Hatim and Mason, we visualize a supernova in text typology. For translation purposes, the authors invite the translator to question himself or herself at the outset of each text unit how *features* compare in the two languages, overriding the text unit. Vis-a-vis the long texts translators encounter, *several* authors sustain that each text will be composed of set obligatory and optional elements in a certain sequence. *Longer* texts can *often* be analyzed into shorter subtexts, which can be abstracted to a *canon*. Take the company financial report: the reader can easily identify a structure of subtexts such as introduction, balance sheet, income statement, profit and loss accounts, auditor's report, and board of directors report (Costa: 1992 a). The notice of a meeting is also an interesting case. It is a *specific* kind of text and displays a certain configuration of features. The notice of a meeting published in a newspaper looks different from the one sent directly to the people entitled to attend the meeting, but the two *kinds* have so much in common that they can be perceived as two subtypes of the same type. Each type is defined as a shallow structure. Examples of shallow types are minutes of meetings, company annual reports, research papers. *Some* types, such as the letter, encroach an innumerable set of subtypes. *Some* types such as the report comprise *several* types of subtexts. The shallow types, however, *have* to be generalizable in order to retain a predictive value. Only a condition of generalizability *ensures* the usefulness of types as a pedagogic instrument. That is what makes the difference between a text-type and a text-model. If *instructors* do not *ensure* the condition of generalizability to the types, they will merely bring rigid text-models to class.

III. TYPOLOGIES AND ORALITY

The whole issue of typologies seems to be particularly *unsettling* when it *concerns* oral language. The *frames* and plans in conversation are not as formalized as in writing. It is the issue of planned and unplanned discourse. In informal conversation which is sometimes where most is at *stake*, existing typologies seem sometimes pointless. Swales (1990: 58-60) settles the issue for a while by assigning to conversation a pre-generic status. Conversation is supposed to be a sort of emanating source where all *genres* originated, a sort of black hole. Distinction

between two types of language, the **unplanned** and planned discourse seems to me a **valid** way out. A kind of **shade/** light contrast. Whereas for **unplanned** discourse the scope is **unlimited**, a sort of limbo; for planned discourse there is a set **number** of options **which** may or will be realized as specific **genres**. For each specific **purpose** there will be a specific typology.

IV. APPLICATIONS OF TYPOLOGIES

I **have been using** a **genre-based** approach in my L.S.P. classes of business English and business **Portuguese** for **some** time. **Genres** are amenable to class management **through** the various stages of presentation, production, follow-up and evaluation. Costa (1992b) shows how the teaching of **genres** can be managed in the classroom and the advantages derived from the **genre** approach in **terms** of learners autonomy. The question remains of how the processing **and** memory works in relation to curricula designed on **the** basis of a **genre-approach**. In a secretarial course I taught a couple of years ago, I conducted a **study** to test the value of **genres** in curriculum design. I **devised** a syllabus composed of two kinds of units: text types and language problems (see appendix). I presented the units in an equivalent way **integrating** **the** use of the different skills in **all** classes. At the end of the course, I had students with 75% attendance or more report on the memorable content of the course. Students were not allowed to use their class notes. Most text types were recalled in the reports. The language problem units were mostly forgotten.

According to De Beaugrande and Dressler the mind operates in **terms** of networks. It seems that text types helped students to learn the material and to recall its **frames** more easily. When I presented a text type as focus of my presentation, I was helping students to learn. These results point to the **importance** of defining shallow text types. It seems that the different **terms** for text types are relatively **close** in meaning theoretically speaking. For practical **purposes**, for each ESP audience the relevant types will **have** to be **defined**. The matter of who defines the relevant text types to each course depends on the degree of responsibility the instructor can expect from the students.

Some ESP **instructors** in England **have** advocated teacher teams. If you **have** to design a curriculum for ESP intended for students in economics, the language teacher and the teachers responsible for courses **in** economics should get together to discuss the content of the language course. The problem, however, is that in the area of economics you **have** **subjects** such as macroeconomics, microeconomics, and

maybe statistics, maths, accounting and so forth. At the **beginning** years at university, students in English **universities** will **have** to write research papers for the **various** courses they are **taking** at the university. That is why the research paper is **certainly** one of the most **important genres** in their curriculum. **The** English course will help students to succeed **in** their academic work. Nevertheless, when time comes, these students will **have** to perform their professional role: to go to international congresses, to write letters to colleagues in different countries using the English language as a medium, send e-mail messages around the world and be prepared to write reports on commissioned work on their own professional area. Then we should ask what the alternative **is** in terms of who defines the curriculum. The curricula for the courses in different **areas** are designed in **such** a way that students should **know** what they will be expected to do with the language and the text types they are interested in producing. The language teacher can **pull up** the curriculum for LSP courses by starting with work on needs analysis with students. Students and instructor can get to a contract that binds both **parties**.

V. CONCLUSION

The survey of text types discloses a panoply of names for the sorts of text that different perspectives entail: **kinds**, forms, modes, functions, aims, uses, types, registers and **genres**. By choice, the term type **is** used as a generic in this paper although Longacre develops a generative theory on text types. Longacre **is the** most theoretical and elegant approach to the issue of text typology. **All** the other classifications **have been** spurred by practical **concerns**. The **genre** approach has successfully **been** applied to detailed distinctions between texts, and, therefore, it lends itself easily to practical purposes **like** translation and language learning. From the study conducted on **genres**, it has **been** found that **genre** distinctions are useful in learning English for specific purposes. **Each** area of study defines its core **genres** in the English curriculum on the basis of a contract between students and instructor. As long as terms mean the **same** to both, it should be the best bridge available.

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APPENDIX

- Unit 1: Introduction
- Unit 2: Memo-writing
- Unit 3: Using Sources
- Unit 4: Parties Galore: language for socializing
- Unit 5: The Book Report
- Unit 6: English Word Formation
- Unit 7: English for Intemational Meetings: Cross-cultural aspects
- Unit 8: Notice of meeting: Portuguese and English in Contrast
- Unit 9: Minute of Meetings: Portuguese and English in Contrast
- Unit 10: Travel Itineraries and References
- Unit 11: Paragraph Structure in English and Portuguese
- Unit 12: Style in Business Communication
- Unit 13: Tricky Sentence Patters
- Unit 14: Spelling Tricks: Review
- Unit 15: Word Order: Review of Syntax
- Unit 16: Address Writing
- Unit 17: Signs and Symbols for Business: Portuguese and English in Contrast
- Unit 18: Messages and Channels: Telexes, E-mail messages, Faxes and Telegrams
- Unit 19: Invitations: Writing invitations and responding to Invitations
- Unit 20: Report Writing:
 - Analysing a Project Report
 - Numbers and Figures: Contrasts in English and Portuguese
 - Graphs and Tables
 - Project and chronology
 - Proposal
 - Transmittal
 - Outline /Table of Contents/ Index
- Unit 21: Oral Presentation
- Unit 22: Punctuation: English and Portuguese in Contrast