

## Genre Boundaries, Functions and Purposes

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## Genre Theory

- Genres are socially-constructed practices
- Context plays an important role in shaping genres (Holquist, 1986)
- Speech genres are recognizable patterns of language-in-context (Bakhtin, 1986)
  - *Speech genres* include both oral and written forms of language
  - We focus on written genres
- Genres embody collections of specific features (Hasan, 1989; Paltridge, 1994)

## Our Definition of *Genre*

- Written (textual) genres are social constructions that represent specific purposes for reading and writing within different social activities, created by social groups who need them to perform certain things.
  - They change over time, reflecting essential shifts in social function performed by that text.
- Genres also represent constellations of textual attributes
  - Some attributes are necessary
  - Other attributes are optional

## Identifying Genres

- Individual genres may be identified and distinguished by:
  - Purpose (social function—realized in semantic attributes)
  - Structural/textual attributes essential to the genre
- e.g: Classified Ad
  - Purpose: to post items, services, personal relationships, etc that are wanted or offered
  - Structural Elements: Abbreviations, contact information, what is offered/desired

## Genre and Textual Form

- We distinguish between genre and the form in which the genre is represented
- One genre may be embodied in many physical forms
  - Employment postings: flyers, newspapers, posters, webpages, online database
- One form may embody many genres
  - Books: novels, dictionaries, textbooks, holy texts, children's stories, plays, poetry, etc
  - Newspapers: news stories, ads, comics, coupons, opinion pieces, crossword puzzles, etc

## Genres in CPLS Data ( $N = >300$ )

- Tx: Classified ad
- Tx: Complaint letter
- Tx: Credit card
- Tx: Gift tag
- Tx: Headline
- Tx: Health exam result
- Tx: Holy text
- Tx: Item list
- Tx: Medication label
- Tx: Medicine wheel
- Tx: News story
- Tx: Order form
- Tx: Personal letter
- Tx: Receipt
- Tx: Schedule
- Tx: Slogan
- Tx: To-do list
- Tx: URL

## Documenting Text Form

- Including textual form along with genre helps us more fully capture literacy practices
  - They document the literacy environment



## Same genre, different forms



## Same form, different genres



- One form, two genres
- **Form:**
  - Wall
- **Genres:**
  - Label graffiti
  - Directive graffiti

## Forms in CPLS data ( $N = > 110$ )

- We have identified 115 individual *forms*, including:
 

Banner	Pamphlet
Blackboard	Piece of paper
Book	Poster
Bus stop	Sandwich board
Card	Scoreboard
Envelope	Sign
Flyer	Ticket
Magazine	Wall
Newspaper	
- This does not include digital texts

## Digital texts: A special case

- Documenting the multimodal nature of digital genres requires us to code *form* at two levels
  - Form within digital world
  - Form of technology
- e.g., Classified ad as a digital text
  - Digital form: dating webpage
  - Technology form: computer

## Digital Forms

- |   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Form within digital world<br>( $N = < 50$ ) | Form of technology ( $N = 4$ ) |
| – Database page                             | – ATM machine                  |
| – Dialogue box                              | – Cell phone                   |
| – Education webpage                         | – Computer                     |
| – Email page                                | – Hand-held electronic         |
| – Instant/text message                      |                                |
| – Operating system interface                |                                |
| – PDF document                              |                                |
| – Tax payment software                      |                                |
| – Weblog page                               |                                |
| – Word processing page                      |                                |



## Function & Purpose

- Communicative Function of reading, writing, etc. of a particular type of literacy engagement on the closer level of participant fulfillment of a communicative function
- Social Purpose of LE are the ways that particular literacy events mediated social activity within socio-cultural contexts.

## Sample Functions Codes (N =>320)

"What is the reader reading this particular text for?"

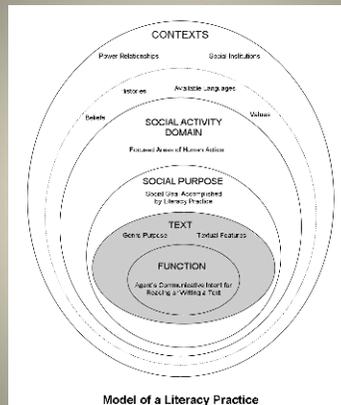
- Fn: To discover how story unfolds
- Fn: To ensure they are credited with paying rent
- Fn: To check health record for information

"What is driving the composition of the text? What is the writer trying to do with this literacy engagement?"

- Fn: To inform of illness of child
- Fn: To inform self/family about family
- Fn: To request item

## Social Purpose Codes (N = >300)

- Pr: In order to apply for/get a driver's license
- Pr: In order to decide how to vote
- Pr: In order to extend stay in country
- Pr: In order to join an organization
- Pr: In order to keep family/self healthy
- Pr: In order to keep record of work
- Pr: In order to learn about God
- Pr: In order to marry someone
- Pr: In order to pass time
- Pr: In order to speak at an event
- Pr: In order to treat patient



## Next Steps: Cross-Case Analyses

- Resistance & Appropriation: Power & Agency within Hegemonic Contexts (Perry & Purcell-Gates; 2005)
  - Analysis of early data from 7 Michigan cases
  - Agency within literacy practices patterned by type of hegemonic context
- Language and Literacy Brokering
  - Different dimensions of brokering in multi-lingual & immigrant/refugee communities
  - Role of context in shaping brokering