REVIEWS

Berkenkotter, C., Bhatia, V. K., Gotti, M. (eds) (2012) *Insights into Academic Genres*. Bern: Peter Lang. 468 pp.

The volume *Insights into Academic Genres* presents the research projects conducted by a group of scholars and researchers in the area of academic discourse from a genre-oriented perspective and presented at an international conference on *Genre Variation in English Academic Communication: Emerging Trends and Disciplinary Insights* held in Bergamo on 23-25 June 2011. The papers in the volume cover the traditional genres within academic discourse, such as research articles or conference presentations, and also some of the new genres which have emerged in connection with the development of new technologies, for example academic blogs.

The contributions are divided into four sections. The volume opens with a more theoretical section titled *Theoretical Insights* which contains two papers by the editors of the volume, Carol Berkenkotter and Vijay Y. Bhatia. The paper *Genre Change in the Digital Age: Questions about Dynamism, Affordances, Evolution* by Carol Berkenkotter discusses the issues of genre variation with focus on the blog as 'a new form of scholarly interaction'. The author points out that the differences and disagreements about generic variation stem from the conceptual framework adopted by the analyst and also disciplinary training, i.e. genre can be conceived either as a socio-rhetorical form or as a recognition category. Her paper also offers an analysis of an academic blog vs. a student blog in a university course. At the end of the paper she emphasizes the need for further research into these new genres, as the principal question which remains to be answered is whether the new genres are really *new* or they are just a variation of the existing genres.

Vijay K. Bhatia's paper *Interdiscursivity in Academic Genres* compares the genres of research journal articles and doctoral theses in order to demonstrate that although they may seem similar in terms of structure, their character is determined by typical academic practices which are closely interconnected with the disciplinary constraints of the two discourse communities. Therefore, an analysis of the rhetorical organisation of the two genres discussed is insufficient; a socio-pragmatic investigation must be performed instead.

The second section *Presenting Research Insights* includes papers investigating those genres which present research results, such as research

articles, PhD dissertations and conference presentations. Davide S. Giannoni in his paper *Value Marking in an Academic Genre: When Authors Signal 'Goodness'* studies a corpus of 100 research articles from a number of impact-factor journals and explores explicit value-marking lexis related to the value of Goodness as manifested in five disciplinary genres (Applied Sciences, Human Sciences, Natural Sciences, Mathematical Sciences and Social Sciences). His analysis shows that Goodness is most prominent in Social Sciences, which can be attributed mainly to the fact that they are 'particularly value-laden' compared to other domains.

In his paper '*Such a reaction would spread all over the cell like a forest fire': A Corpus Study of Argument by Analogy in Scientific Discourse* Davide Mazzi analyses medico-scientific research articles in order to examine the occurrence of argument by analogy. His analysis is based on the IMRD structure (i.e. Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion), which enables the author to determine the occurrence of analogy across the four sections of research articles as well as its main role in each, as analogy can be used in all four sections although for a different purpose.

Research articles are also the subject of analysis in the chapter by Pilar Mur-Dueñas *Exploring Generic Integrity and Variation: Research Articles in Two English-Medium International Applied Economics Journals.* The author focuses on variation within the same genre by comparing the macro- and micro-structure of a foundational English-medium international journal (i.e. *Applied Economics*) and its sister journal (i.e. *Applied Economic Letters*) in order to reveal how the contributors' writing discursive practices differ depending on the conventions of the two publication sites, the main differences being the length of the articles and the reviewing process they undergo. Therefore, the analysis shows that scholars have to adjust their writing to the site where they want to publish their research results.

William Bromwich in his paper *Generic Integrity in Jurisprudence and Philosophy of Law: Metadiscursive Strategies for Expressing Dissent within the Constraints of Collegiality* explores metadiscursive devices, such as evaluative lexis or stance markers, used to express criticism and praise of the work of colleagues by expert scholars. In the analysis he explores some features of academic discourse in the two domains, including personality and interpersonality, self-deprecation, hedging of critical remarks, self-effacement and dissenting interrogatives. He concludes that these writer-oriented devices help authors to achieve the personal credibility and extend knowledge and at the same time safeguard 'epistemic conventions and collegiality'.

Conference presentations are examined in the paper '*The title of my paper is...' Introducing the Topic in Conference Presentations* by Francisco Javier Fernández Polo. The study examines the identification of the topic of the presentation early in the introduction. Although it may seem redundant because the topic has been announced previously and therefore it is repeated, Francisco Polo argues that the identification of the topic is complementary rather than redundant; this specific move is highly intertextual as it helps to mark the boundary with the preceding presentation, emphasize the topic and also establish contact with the audience. He points out that the purpose of the written title (on the title slide) is to convey the voice of the expert whereas the spoken presentation talks to the colleague.

Sue Starfield, Brian Paltridge and Louise Ravelli have chosen to explore 'practice-based doctorates' in order to assess their originality. This relatively new genre, compared to a research-based doctorate, consists of a written component and a creative component. Their study *'Why do we have to write?': Practice-Based Theses in the Visual and Performing Arts and the Place of Writing* adopts Swales's investigative approach of 'textography', as this combines text analysis with ethnographic techniques (e.g. surveys and interviews) and thus, as they believe, helps to uncover how and why texts are written and identify the underlying features of written texts. As their extensive research also included a survey among doctoral theses supervisors and students, its findings have important implications as to how doctoral theses might develop in the future.

Doctoral theses are investigated also in Masumi Ono's chapter *A Genre Analysis of Japanese and English Introductory Chapters of Literature Ph.D. Theses,* in which she focuses on the generic structure of the introductory chapters. Due to adopting a cross-cultural as well as an intra-cultural approach she reveals a number of cross-cultural differences, for example, that the English theses introductory chapters comprise more steps than the Japanese theses.

The third section of the volume *Reviewing and Popularising Research Insights* comprises chapters dealing with genres which discuss and disseminate and review research findings within the academic community. Anna Stermieri's study *The Move Structure of Academic Theatre Reviews* examines this genre with the aim of uncovering its prototypical move structure. She has indentified a relatively consistent generic pattern of rhetorical organization of the ATR comprised by four principal moves, i.e. the Introductory Move, the Contextualizing Move, the Narrative Move and the Evaluative Move, moves 1 and 4 being the obligatory ones. Through the diachronic approach she also points to variations that may have taken place within this genre between 1991 and 2001, one of the most significant being the shift of the stance of the critic to a more involved position, which according to her is reflected in the increase in the use of evaluative expressions (e.g. comparatives and superlatives).

The paper *The Dissemination of Scientific Knowledge in Academia* by Susan Kermas deals with the genre of science news report, which displays a high degree of variation as these reports can be addressed to experts and therefore take the form of specialized texts, or they can be popularized informative texts addressed to laymen. The study is devoted mainly to lexical issues as these help to illustrate the close interconnection between author, reader and commercial interest in reports from the field of botany. Through the comparison of the original research abstracts and their derived popular science reports Susan Kermas demonstrates the influence the hypothetical recipient has on the choice of lexis, hence the use of technical words in scientific abstracts (i.e. the use of Latin names) and the use of common names in texts for the lay readership.

Isabel Herrando-Rodrigo's paper is an interesting study of a type of hybrid genre – the medical electronic popularisations compared to the medical research articles. Her paper *Blurred Genres: Hybrid Functions in the Medical Field* explains that the former are not simple reformulations of the latter. The two genres have a different purpose reflected, for example, in the language choices; the medical electronic popularisations focus on the objects of study whereas the medical research articles deal with disciplinary procedures. This might entail that the medical popularisations have an informal tone, which was illustrated by previous research into this genre. However, Isabel Herrando-Rodrigo comes to the conclusion that the style of this genre can be described as hybrid – on the one hand it seeks neutrality and impersonality in order to make these texts reliable and informative; on the other hand, the passive voice employed in peer reviewed scientific medical articles is transformed into the active voice in medical popularisations.

One of the 'newcomers' to the genre system – the weblog – is analysed by María José Luzón, whose study *Comments in Academic Blogs as a New Form of Scholarly Interaction* deals with the interpersonal strategies in blog comments in comparison with other academic and computer-mediated genres. The author emphasizes the need to approach the blogs as a form of online scholarly communication where the participants construct their online identity and form online social relations. The analysis of academic blogs from several different disciplines shows that academic weblogs comments are a hybrid genre as they adopt discursive strategies used in other academic genres and computer-mediated genres, ranging from strategies to create and maintain solidarity relations to strategies that enable to construe confrontation and conflict.

The last two papers in the third section examine Master's Theses by Czech and German students of English. Olga Dontcheva-Navratilova's study *Cross-Cultural Differences in the Construal of Authorial Voice in the Genre of Diploma*

Theses investigates how novice non-native speakers employ the pronominal self-reference items in contrast with impersonal *it*-constructions when presenting findings or negotiating claims. Both Czech and German students are familiar with the Anglo-American academic discourse conventions and the characteristic features of the genre. On the other hand, the choices made by the students are also influenced by a number of other factors, including interference of L1 academic literacy, previous education, their supervisors and also the students' level (often insufficient) of rhetorical skills.

Renata Povolná has chosen to explore the cross-cultural differences in Master's Theses by Czech and German students of English in the use of causal and contrastive discourse markers. The analysis presented in the paper *Cross-Cultural Differences in the Use of Discourse Markers by Czech and German Students of English in the Genre of Master's Theses* leads her to the conclusion that some differences can be traced mainly in the use of hypotactic and paratactic discourse markers, and although the differences may be seen as resulting from the students' previous instruction and therefore be partly culturally determined, it seems that the main reason for the differences lies in individual students' knowledge and level of English. The paper therefore has important implications to teachers of academic writing who should provide students with sufficient instruction in how to efficiently employ the text-organizing devices.

The fourth section of the volume *Insights into Pedagogic Genres* is devoted to the genres connected with the teaching of specialized disciplines at a university level. The study *Variation in Students' Accounts of Graphic Data: Context and Context Factors in a Polytechnic Setting* by Carmen Sancho-Guinda analyses accounts of visual data reports by her students, namely graph interpretations, in order to demonstrate their hybridity and to disclose how such commentaries of visuals are constructed. She argues that graph interpretations, although flexible in nature, are to be considered 'staged texts' and therefore a genre. Her findings throw light on the nature of this discourse as they reveal prevalence of engagement features, compared to stance ones, which results from the need to make the accounts informative and proficient and leads to the predominance of reader considerateness over the expression of opinion.

Another type of genre used in a specialized discipline is investigated by Michela Giordano. In her paper *K Case Briefs in American Law Schools: A Genre-Based Analysis* she analyses case briefs which law students prepare out of class in order to gain background knowledge about a case since a case brief is a summary of an appellate court opinion. A corpus of contract case briefs is explored in order to illustrate how such briefs are structured and which rhetorical devices are used in legal reasoning because the briefs help law students to learn

to classify and categorise – skills essential for legal practice. Since the case briefs display a consistent use of common textual features and are produced based on a certain set of rules and conventions, they are rightly considered an independent genre.

Christoph A. Hafner, Lindsay Miller and Connie Ng Kwai-Fun's research reflects the increasing interest in genres which have evolved and are developing due to the development of modern technologies. Their chapter *Digital Video Projects in English for Academic Purposes: Students' and Lecturers' Perceptions and Issues Raised* addresses the question of how the traditional conceptions of literacy have changed or rather have expanded in the digital era. Although they suggest that teachers need to respond to the development in information and communication technologies, this on the other hand should not happen at the expense of the traditional concerns of literacy education, such as reading and writing practices. They present a tertiary course designed for students of science in which students create a digital video scientific documentary, through which they become familiar with this hybrid genre that combines the modern and traditional scientific literacy practices.

Information and communication technology tools are also the focus of the research carried out by Patrizia Anesa and Daniela Iovino and presented in the paper *Interactive Whiteboards as Enhancers of Genre Hybridization in Academic Settings.* They look into how the use of interactive boards brings together various features of lectures, seminars and workshops which merge and combine here in the same context although normally they occur separately within the particular genre. In particular they analyze lectures at a university level, which although being primarily a spoken genre combine spoken, written and visual features. They also suggest that the use of this tool contributes to hybridization in academic genres, which is a finding that will need to be further investigated in a wider context.

Academic course descriptions are analysed by Sara Gesuato in her paper *Representation of Events and Event Participants in Academic Course Descriptions*, the aim of which is to inform students about course offerings and their content. The author has found out that although the course descriptions are addressed to students, students are not generally direct interlocutors in the texts but they are rather referred to as third parties. She also examines which grammatical features help to enhance the official character of this kind of text; for example, the use of the present simple and the *will* future are identified as the means of expressing the content accurately and creating the impression that the course is well-prepared and thought-out. Both also contribute to the authoritativeness of the texts.

The whole volume illustrates the diversity of current research related to academic genres as well as the latest development in genre studies. Academics and researchers thus respond to the changes and variations in existing academic discourses and they are also interested in the newly created ones connected mainly with technological advances. The contributors have answered many intriguing questions and at the same time have shown that they are fully aware of the fact that some of their findings will have to be further explored and deserve more extensive research. The volume is therefore a valuable contribution to the study of academic discourses as it reflects both the complexity and importance of current academic research and has important implications for both current and future researchers as well as teachers and their students.

Renata Jančaříková