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## Critical Genre Analysis: Theoretical Preliminaries

### Abstract

Genre theory has generally focused on the analysis of generic constructs with some attention to the contexts in which such genres are produced, interpreted, and used, often giving the impression as if producing and interpreting genres is an end in itself, rather than a means to an end. As a consequence, there has been very little attention paid to professional practice, which is the ultimate objective of these discursive activities. It is thus necessary to develop a more comprehensive and multiperspective genre analytical framework to analyze interdiscursive performance in professional practice. In this paper, I propose such a multiperspective critical genre analytical framework and attempt to discuss some of the key theoretical perspectives underlying critical genre theory.

### 1. From Genre Analysis to Critical Genre Analysis

Genre analysis incorporates a variety of frameworks used to analyse a range of textual genres constructed, interpreted and used by members of various disciplinary communities in academic, professional, workplace and other institutional contexts. The analyses range from close linguistic studies of texts as products, to investigations into the dynamic complexity of discursive practices of professional and workplace communities (Swales 1990, Bhatia 1993), and further to a broad understanding of socio-cultural and critical practices often focusing on processes of interpreting these textual genres in real life settings (Bazerman 1981, Devitt 1991, Bhatia 2004, Swales 2004). Understanding the nature of discursive practices of various discourse communities in specific disciplinary cultures (Bargiela-Chiappini/Nickerson 1999), which often constrain and give shape to these communicative processes and textual genres, is another aspect of genre-based investigations. Awareness and understanding of genre knowledge is yet another crucial factor in genre-based analyses, which may be understood as situated cognition (Berkenkotter/Huckin 1993), related to the discursive practices of members of disciplinary cultures. The co-operation and collaboration of specialists from various communities provide an important corrective to purely text-based approaches (Barton 2004, Bhatia et al. 2008, 2012).

The rationale for such a wide range of developments is that communication is not simply a matter of putting words together in a grammatically correct and rhetorically coherent textual form, but more importantly, it is also a matter of having a desired impact on the members of a specific discourse community, and of recognizing conventions they follow in their everyday negotiation and dissemination of meaning in professional contexts. In this sense, communication is more than simply words, syntax, and even semantics; in fact, it is a matter of understanding ‘why and how members of specific professional or disciplinary communities communicate the way they do’ (Bhatia 1993, 2004). This may require, among a number of other inputs, the discipline-specific knowledge of how professionals conceptualize issues and talk about them in order to achieve their disciplinary and professional goals. Considering the complexity of some of these factors, I would like to claim that professional discourse operates simultaneously, at the very least, at four rather distinct, yet overlapping, levels, i.e., as text, genre, professional practice, and as professional culture, and hence can be analysed as such, which can be represented as in Diagram 1:

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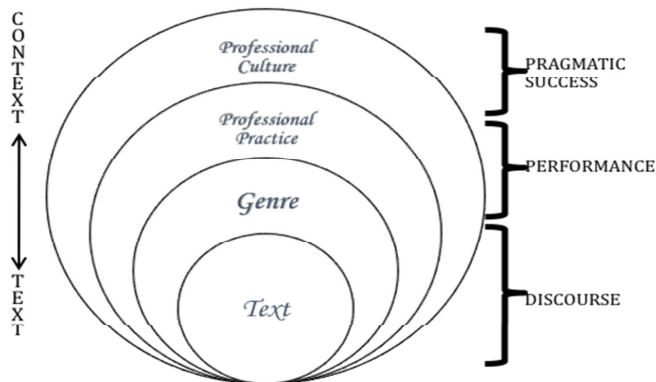


Diagram 1. Overlapping levels of discourse representations

Discourse as text refers to the representation and analysis of language use that is confined to the surface level properties of discourse, which include formal, as well as functional aspects of discourse, i.e., phonological, lexico-grammatical, semantic, organisational, including inter-sentential cohesion, and other aspects of text structure such as intertextuality, etc., not necessarily considering context in a broad sense. Although discourse is essentially embedded in context, discourse as text often excludes any significant analysis of context in any meaningful way, except in the very narrow sense of intertextuality to include interactions with surrounding texts. The emphasis at this level of analysis is essentially on the properties associated with the construction of the textual product, rather than on the interpretation or use of such a product. It largely ignores the contribution often made by the reader on the basis of what he or she brings to the interpretation of the textual output, especially in terms of knowledge of the world, including the professional, socio-cultural, and institutional knowledge as well as experience that one is likely to use to interpret, use, and exploit such discourses.

Discourse as genre extends the analysis beyond the textual output to incorporate context in a broader sense to account for not only the way text is constructed, but also the way it is likely to be interpreted, used and exploited in specific contexts, whether social, institutional, or more narrowly professional, to achieve specific disciplinary goals, which often require the use of methods that investigate not only linguistic issues, but also socio-pragmatic ones. This kind of grounded analysis of the textual output is very typical of any framework within genre-based theory.

Discourse as professional practice takes this interaction with context a step further in the direction of relevant socio-pragmatic context, where the focus shifts significantly from the textual output to features of context, such as managing identities of the professionals, the institutional structures or professional relationships the genres are likely to maintain or change, and the challenges and benefits such genres are likely to bring to a particular set of readers, depending upon whether one is an insider or outsider. The most interesting development at this level is concern with text-external factors that make a specific genre not only possible, but also relevant to a specific professional or disciplinary context.

Finally, professional genres and practices are inevitably embedded in and constrained by the specific professional or institutional cultures they are embedded in. It is important to note that the four interacting representations of discourse are not mutually exclusive, but essentially complementary to each other. Although it is possible to focus on any one or more levels of realisation depending upon the objective(s) one may decide to pursue, in order to have a comprehensive understanding of professional communication it is necessary to have some understanding of all levels of discourse realisation. Traditionally, a typical genre analytical exercise might begin at the bottom end, exploring genre as text exhaustively and then working toward analysing discourse as genre, often using context as explanation for the analysis of textualisation of lexico-grammatical

and discursive resources. However, stopping at these levels is less likely to be satisfactory as it will essentially underplay or completely ignore the role of professional practice and culture, thus ignoring much of the socio-pragmatic aspects of genre construction, interpretation, use, or exploitation of generic resources.

Having given a brief account of genre analysis, I would now like to reflect on my engagement with genre at the top two levels of discourse realisation, i.e., discourse as professional practice and discourse as professional culture, and suggest this as a move towards what I have elsewhere called 'Critical Genre Analysis' (CGA) (Bhatia 2008a, 2008b, 2010, 2012), which can ultimately be linked to 'Interdiscursive Performance' in professional, institutional, organisational or other conventionalised contexts. However, before we go further in this direction to discuss some of the key features of critical genre theory, I would like to discuss, though briefly, some aspects of 'criticality' in critical theory, and then distinguish its differing roles in critical discourse analysis and critical genre analysis.

## 2. Aspects of Critical Theory

Critical theory, in principle, does not accept everyday communication in most socio-political and institutional contexts at face value, and attempts to account for and demystify what might be underlying motivations for the construction, interpretation, use or exploitation of such discursive acts. Critical theory thus does not favour a passive acceptance of what might ordinarily appear to be to non-specialist users of language. So one of the main implications of critical theory could be to demystify social and professional practices of expert members of such specialised communities in various institutional and professional, including academic, cultures. However, it is also possible to extend the use of critical theory to question the motives of such social communities, institutions and organizations which underpin injustices and power imbalances to investigate how ordinary members of the society are regulated by such institutional processes and actions, and how such actions can be evaluated in order to remedy social improprieties and attempt to restore power equality and justice in society to make it a better place.

In its recent manifestation, critical theory, as associated with the Frankfurt School of Sociology, has taken upon itself the task of critiquing modern capitalist society, a concern which is different from its traditional form where it simply was meant to understand and explain social acts. As such, recent versions of social critical theory (Geuss 1981) are concerned with issues of power, authority, and injustice, associated with corporate capitalism, thus politicizing social issues through the analysis of discursive data. It is important to point out that most versions of critical theory attempt to analyze and explore the surface of social life to account for a more complete and deeper understanding of how social actions are enacted. Habermas (1971) redefined critical social theory as a theory of communication, focusing on communicative rationality, on the one hand, and distorted communication, on the other, thus encouraging the two versions of critical theory toward greater overlap. In this way, the two meanings of critical theory, though originating from two distinct philosophical traditions, come closer toward some degree of overlap (Calhoun 1995).

Critical theory in literary contexts regards interpretation as crucial to our understanding of meanings of texts and discourses, including aspects of intertextuality and interdiscursivity. Much of literary critical theory therefore can be considered as traditional as it makes use of interpretation and explanation as a way of understanding texts rather than changing social acts in the Marxist sense. Critical theory in literature and the humanities thus does not necessarily involve an evaluative perspective, whereas critical social theory essentially has some aspects of values or norms, which are used to evaluate or judge social actions.

The term *critical* thus denotes two overlapping and yet very distinct notions: one as 'critical social theory', the main concern of which is to identify, evaluate and remedy societal actions through the analysis of language, actions that are considered to introduce social inequalities, injustices and disempowerment affecting certain sections of society; the other denotes a rigorous in-

tellectual analysis to demystify social and institutional actions as distinct from ideological interpretation. This second interpretation of critical theory is equally powerful and valid in that it aims to demystify, understand, explain, and account for the kinds of professional practices in which we are engaged in our everyday life. In order to achieve this objective, critical theory encourages a framework that allows rigor and depth in investigation that is essentially multiperspectival and multidimensional in scope, and attributes equal, if not more, importance to practice, in addition to the semiotic means that are often employed. It is in this second sense that I use the term ‘critical’ in critical genre theory, and not in the sense of critical social theory. Let me now give more substance to these two versions of critical theory, in particular discussing how the two have been used in existing discourse analytical studies, distinguishing them further to make claims about the validity and use of the term ‘critical’ in critical genre analysis as distinct from critical discourse analysis.

### 3. Critical Discourse Analysis

The foregoing section makes it clear that the term ‘critical’ as used in critical social theory does not encourage passive acceptance or interpretation of discursive actions, as it invariably questions such simple interpretive accounts that are available on the basis of surface-level analysis of discourse. Critical theory, in general, tends to dig deeper to identify problems as well as limitations inherent in human communication that often lead to injustices and inequities in social structures. An additional factor that is added to this pursuit is an attempt to remedy such injustices, inequalities and disempowerment of certain sections of society. Drawing largely on this interpretation of Critical Social Theory, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has developed one of the most dominant and influential frameworks to analyze issues of power and language use in social practice. As Van Dijk (2001) claims:

(CDA) primarily studies the way social power, abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by texts and talk in social and political context. With such dissident research, critical discourse analysts take explicit position, and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality. (Van Dijk 2001: 352)

Critical Discourse Analysis is thus defined by its attempt to analyse and redress the ideological and asymmetrical power imbalances that impede socio-political and cultural processes through the analysis of semiotic data. Fairclough (1989), Fairclough/Wodak (1997) and Wodak (2001) in a similar manner reiterate such interpretations of CDA. For example:

[CDA is] fundamentally concerned with analysing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language. In other words, CDA aims to investigate critically social inequality as it is expressed, signalled, constituted, legitimized and so on by language use (or in discourse) ... [T]hree concepts figure indispensably in all CDA: the concept of power, the concept of history, and the concept of ideology. (Wodak 2001: 2-3)

A dominant characteristic of CDA is its belief that language is social practice (Fairclough 1989, Fairclough/Wodak 1997) meaning that discourse both shapes and is shaped by society. Discursive events share a co-constitutive relationship with the social and institutional contexts within which they take place. They are socially conditioned by the local and macro contexts in which they occur, but at the same time, the discursive events shape the social identities and relationships of the participants engaged in these events themselves. As Fairclough and Wodak (1997: 258) state:

Discursive practices may have major ideological effects – that is, they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between (for instance) social classes, women and men, and ethnic/cultural majorities and minorities through the ways in which they represent things and position people.

Fairclough (1989: 5) further elaborates that CDA investigates the relationship between language, power and ideology, analysing “social interactions in a way which focuses upon their linguistic elements, which sets out to show up their generally hidden determinants in the system of social relationships, as well as hidden effects they may have upon that system.” Fairclough distinguishes

hes between two approaches to discourse: the critical and the non-critical. Critical approaches differ from non-critical approaches in not just describing discursive practices, but also showing how discourse is shaped by relations of power and ideologies, and the constructive effects discourse has upon social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and belief, neither of which is apparent to discourse participants (Fairclough 1992: 12). He sums up his view as follows:

‘Critical’ means hidden connections between language, power and ideology, especially the way abuse, dominance, inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted in socio-political contexts ... *Critical* is used in the special sense of aiming to show up connections which may be hidden from people - such as the connections between language, power and ideology... (Fairclough 1989: 5)

In a similar manner, Van Dijk’s (1993) socio-cognitive approach towards discourse perceives CDA as an instrument for analysing power structures in discourse, as he mentions, “critical discourse analysis is specifically interested in power *abuse* that is in breaches of laws, rules and principles of democracy, equality and justice by those who wield power” (254-255). However, CDA is characterized not only by a concern with describing the different positions which people assume in the discourse process with respect to attitude, beliefs and so on, but also by its commitment to reveal the impositions of power and ideological influence. Pennycook (1994: 121) argues that although CDA approaches differ to some degree, “they share a commitment to going beyond linguistic description to attempt explanation, to showing how social inequalities are reflected and created in language, and to finding ways through their work to change the conditions of inequality that their work uncovers... Critical discourse analysis deals with ‘the larger social, cultural, and ideological forces that influence our lives’.

Widdowson (1995), however, identifies a number of issues in the way CDA analyses discourse. He points out that CDA seems to imply not only the identification of social inequalities, but also the correcting of them. The commitment here is not only to social comprehensiveness but to social conscience as well. This, he continues, may be seen as a laudable enterprise, but the consequence is that the scope of description is not extended but reduced because it narrows down to a single preferred interpretation. He argues:

...discourse is a matter of deriving meaning from text by referring it to contextual conditions, to the beliefs, attitudes, values which represent different versions of reality. The same text, therefore, can give rise to different discourses. Widdowson (1995: 168)

He adds that “critical discourse analysis claims to be distinctive because it is critical, that is to say, it reveals the insinuation of ideology, the imposition of power which other people fail to recognise” (Widdowson 1995: 169). However, he continues, “to the extent that critical discourse analysis is committed it cannot provide analysis but only partial interpretation”. Analysis should involve the demonstration of different interpretations and what language data might be adduced as evidence in each case. In doing so, it should explain just how different discourses can be derived from the same text, and indeed how the very definition of discourse as the pragmatic achievement of social action necessarily leads to the recognition of such plurality. But in CDA, he claims, we do not find this. There is rarely a suggestion that alternative interpretations are possible. There is usually the implication that the single interpretation offered is uniquely validated by textual facts (Widdowson 1995: 169). However, the discourse of the analyst’s interpretation may not match the discourse of the author’s intention. CDA thus tends to pay more attention to the analyst’s interpretation of a text, and very little attention to the varied ways in a variety of contexts by different audiences a text can be produced, interpreted, and even exploited, which raises the issues of subjective, partial or even prejudicial interpretations. Schegloff (1997) also questions this tendency to assume the relevance of specific aspects of contexts in CDA to project the analyst’s own political biases and prejudices onto their data for analysis. Linguistic resources, he maintains, are also a kind of context as they do provide what Halliday (1973: 51) called ‘meaning potential’ in that they contribute to the production of a text or genre, and also to its interpretation.

Coming to the actual analysis of discourse, Fairclough (2003: 2) favours *textually oriented discourse analysis*, which focuses on formal linguistic and textual features, to study social practices, which are discursively shaped and enacted. As such, he believes that social practices are linguistically analysable and interpretable. Although he mentions the role of context and intertextuality, he shows very little serious interest in the analysis of the use and implications of text-external resources. Thus, to the extent that critical discourse analysis is committed to textually oriented discourse analysis, it cannot provide complete analysis but only partial interpretation. It is not possible for the analyst to provide different interpretations without going deeper into the context, particularly incorporating text-external aspects, in which a specific discourse is constructed and interpreted. In CDA, the analyst does not have any intention to seek and explain how the same text can give expression to different discourses, as this kind of multiplicity of interpretations is not on CDA's agenda. There is usually the implication that the single interpretation offered is uniquely validated by the textual facts (Widdowson 1995: 169). CDA thus tends to pay more attention to the analyst's interpretation of a text, and very little attention to the varied ways in which a particular text can be interpreted by different audiences.

#### 4. Critical Genre Analysis

Although increasingly multidisciplinary, Critical Discourse Analysis and Genre Analysis have drawn their inspiration from applied sociolinguistics, which has primarily been concerned with analysis of language use in real life contexts. Critical Genre Analysis (unlike Critical Discourse Analysis, which is intended to analyze and critique social practices) recognizes that studying genre is not simply meant to describe and explain language use, but also to account for professional practices in an attempt to investigate why and how professionals create, disseminate and consume specialized knowledge and exploit available semiotic resources and modes of communication to achieve their professional goals. CGA, thus intends to extend the scope of conventional genre analytical theory from a focus on textual artefacts to one based on 'professional practices and activities', thus making a crucial distinction between 'discursive practices' and 'professional practices' in an attempt to define and propose a more comprehensive framework opening up the 'socio-pragmatic space' (Bhatia 2004) for the study of professional practice and culture. There is widespread appropriation of discursive resources and practices across professional genres, practices and even professional cultures giving rise to new (hybrid) forms (Bhatia 2008a, 2008b, 2010). CGA draws on the notion of critical theory to the extent that it encourages the capacity to demystify, understand, explain, and account for the kinds of professional practices in which specialist users of language are engaged in their everyday professional life. As discussed earlier, the aspect of critical theory drawn on by CGA is, to a certain extent, similar to its use in the analysis and understanding of literature, in the sense that it is not necessarily oriented towards radical social change or even towards the analysis of society, but instead focuses on rigorous analysis of texts in contexts, in all their manifestations. The main objective of CGA is to establish and enhance our understanding and analysis of professional genres and practices, rather than focusing on partial descriptions.

The notion of criticality as used in Critical Genre Analysis thus tends to further our understanding of the discursive actions of expert professionals in their designated disciplinary contexts, and in doing so CGA tends to offer very thick accounts of 'why most professionals construct, interpret, use and exploit genre conventions the way they do'. In other words, CGA is meant to describe, explain, and account for the discursive performance of professionals in their very specific disciplinary and often interdisciplinary contexts and cultures. Let me give more substance to what I have so far alluded to here, and in doing so, I would also like to discuss ways in which CGA is distinct from CDA.

#### **4.1. Social vs. Professional Practice**

Unlike CDA that considers discourse as social practice, CGA is concerned with a rather limited and specific focus on professional practice, in addition to professional genres. Instead of analysing discourses of all kinds in a much wider social context, CGA narrowly defines professional or disciplinary, often interdisciplinary, contexts, which may include professional and disciplinary cultures within which interdiscursive actions invariably take place. Since genres by their very nature more centrally operate within a narrow context of a specific profession or discipline, this approach is more likely to offer better insights. Any attempt to consider genres as social practice will essentially blur the nature of analysis, and hence may not be adequate or effective for genre theory. As far as CDA is concerned, social practice is a key concept for analysis and it seems to serve its purpose very well; however, the same is not true of CGA, which requires a more focused investigation of specifically defined professional (inter)discursive practices, and hence the key concept for CGA is professional practice and culture.

#### **4.2. Power and Ideology vs. Analytical Rigour**

As mentioned earlier, CDA has a strong focus on investigating the role of power and ideology in social practice, especially the way these are played out to create imbalances in social order, and CDA aims to redress such imbalances and correct social order. CGA, on the other hand, has no such agenda whatsoever, and focuses primarily on analytic rigour in an attempt to investigate the motivations, on the part of professionals in specific contexts, for their everyday professional actions within the context of individual professional cultures. This focus on power and ideology in CDA somehow underplays the need to bring in other contesting interpretations in other contexts, which, as mentioned earlier, raises the issue of subjective, partial or even prejudicial interpretations.

CGA, on the other hand, has a very different agenda; it considers discursive and interdiscursive professional practices, most of which are essentially collaborative and interdisciplinary in nature, as its main focus. This essentially requires a multidimensional as well as multiperspectival approach to analysis, in particular the use of ethnographic procedures, including but not limited to what Smart (2006) calls grounded and interpretive ethnographic investigations of professional practice. More than a theory of textualisation, as is the case in CDA, CGA requires a theory of contextualisation to bring into focus the role of multiple perspectives that any good theory of discourse needs to encourage. Moreover, CGA has its focus on the actions of a specific professional or disciplinary community rather than an individual specialist, so multiple perspectives in analysis is a requirement as the analyst is essentially concerned with how members of a specific community typically behave in well-defined contexts. The main objective is to demystify discursive conventions, which by their very nature demand multiple perspectives.

#### **4.3. Theory of Contextualisation**

The notion of context in discourse analysis has led to analysis of the real world of discourse, in particular the analysis of the world of professions (Bhatia 2004). The emergence of contextualisation of professional discourse has opened up a number of avenues for the analysis of genres, especially through the studies of New Rhetoric drawing on some popular European social theories (Bakhtin 1986), all of which seem to encourage analyses of genre as social action, as in Miller (1984), where she claimed that “a rhetorically sound definition of genre must be centred not on the substance or the form of discourse but on the action it is used to accomplish” (1984: 151). Similarly, Bazerman (1988) argued that it was crucial to gain insights into the rhetorical strategies that are appropriate, and somewhat expected, for their particular situations. For him, it was crucial to take into account the fundamental assumptions and aims of the community in order to understand any form of professional discourse.

Bhatia (2011) points out that although genres are viewed as conventionalized constructs, expert members of the disciplinary and professional communities often exploit generic resources to express their private organizational intentions within the constructs of professionally shared communicative purposes. Genres thus are reflections of disciplinary and organizational cultures, and in that sense, they focus on professional actions embedded within disciplinary, professional and other institutional practices. As such, all disciplinary and professional genres have integrity of their own, which is often identified by reference to a combination of textual, discursive and contextual factors. Genres thus extend the analysis beyond the textual product to incorporate context in a broader sense to account for not only the way the genre is constructed but also the way it is often interpreted, used and exploited in specific institutional or more narrowly professional contexts to achieve specific disciplinary objectives (Bhatia 2004). Similarly, Devitt (2004) points out that genre should be seen as “the nexus between an individual’s actions and a socially defined context”. Genre, she emphasizes, is a “reciprocal dynamic within which individuals’ actions construct and are reconstructed by recurring context of situation, context of culture and context of genres” (Devitt 2004: 31). Frow (2006: 3), on the other hand, does not consider genres as fixed and pre-given forms, but as “performances of genre”. Thus, unlike CDA, which seems to underplay the role of context, CGA is viewed as a theory of contextualisation focusing primarily on interdiscursive performance in specialised and narrowly defined professional, disciplinary and cultural contexts.

#### **4.4. Discursive vs. Interdiscursive Socio-pragmatic Space**

*Discursive Space* in the context of professional communication is not simply a physical space used and exploited by specialists in various disciplines, organisations, institutions and professions in the construction and interpretation of specialised communication, but, more importantly, it is also a socio-pragmatic space within which socio-cultural, including institutional, dynamics, are negotiated and played out to achieve professional objectives. One thing that complicates this notion of discursive space is the fact that specialists in professions ‘appropriate’ (Bakhtin 1981) semiotic resources from other discourse contexts and genres, which invariably include genre conventions, disciplinary practices and professional cultures that constrain available semiotic modes of communication to achieve their discursive ends for the construction, dissemination and consumption of meaning, making the notion of discursive space essentially *interdiscursive*. This dynamic exploitation of interdiscursive socio-pragmatic space thus is as much a matter of acquisition of professional expertise as that of discursive performance in specific professional contexts.

CGA thus is distinctive in terms of its wider conceptualisation of genres to reflect their evolution incorporating the concepts of dynamism, hybridization and innovation. Analysing discourse through a genre-based lens and recognizing dynamism and hybridization as intrinsic properties of genres allow one to harmonize a multi-method approach to studying the textual dynamics of professional genres in their socio-pragmatic space (Bhatia 2008), as opposed to analysing texts or discourse in a purely textual and intertextual space. Hybridization is an inevitable function of genre dynamism, and focusing more seriously on interdiscursivity (i.e., text-external factors, such as genre conventions in a socio-pragmatic space) rather than just intertextuality (i.e., text-internal and intertextual factors within a discursive space) enhances our understanding of genre. It also allows us to explore and take into account the very important relationship between genres and professional practice and specific disciplinary cultures, which is a crucial factor in our understanding of ‘why and how professionals use language the way they do’. CDA, on the other hand, does not have these questions on its agenda; instead it focuses on the nature of linguistic evidence that indicates ideologies that communicate injustice and power imbalances in society and considers how these can be redressed and corrected. CDA thus more generally focuses on social practices within what Bhatia (2004) calls ‘social space’ “to demystify the ideological and asymmetrical power structures that inhibit social, political and cultural processes through the analysis of various semiotic data” (Van Dijk 2001: 352).



Discursive practices may have major ideological effects – that is, they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between (for instance) social classes, women and men, and ethnic/cultural majorities and minorities through the ways in which they represent things and position people. CDA is distinguished from mere discourse analysis in that it studies text in an inter-discursive and intertextual manner in the process of meaning-making. However, in practice there seems to be more emphasis on intertextuality, and very little on interdiscursive properties of discourse, partly because CDA is less keen on discourse and genre conventions, and more on actual instances of discourse and in their interpretation. For CGA, it seems to be the opposite because of its focus on genre, the nature of which is based on text-external factors, including appropriations of disciplinary and genre conventions to create mixed, and embedded genres. So whereas CDA pays more attention to individual social acts, CGA is essentially concerned with genre conventions that make the texts possible, i.e., ‘who contributes what, when, how’ to the on-going interaction.

#### 4.5. Text Oriented Discourse Analysis vs. Multiperspective Genre Analysis

As mentioned earlier in the article, CDA’s analytical perspective is primarily driven by what Fairclough (2003) calls *textually oriented discourse analysis* relying on the analysis of textual properties in order to study social practices. The main argument rests on the Foucaultian theory that practices are discursively shaped and enacted, and the textual properties of discourse constitute a key factor in their interpretation. So his interest is in the analysis of social practices as discursively shaped, as well as the discursive effects of such textual actions. CGA, on the other hand, is centrally concerned with the interdiscursive behaviour of professionals as part of a specific disciplinary community, and not in a particular instance of social action but a conventional response typical of a professional community, which essentially is a multidimensional act, and in order to study this one must resort to a multiperspectival analysis. This is one of the main concerns in CGA and that is why it is necessary to employ multiple methods, rather than just a text-oriented analysis. One of the key characteristics of CGA methodology is the use of certain ethnographic procedures to understand the function of text-external factors in genre practice. Smart (1998) recommends the use of grounded and interpretive ethnographic investigation of professional practice, which includes detached observational accounts of expert behaviour and convergent narrative accounts of first-hand experiences of actively engaged professionals to gain access to multiple perspectives, interpretations, and motivations.

### 5. CGA as Theory of Interdiscursive Performance

I have made an attempt to identify and discuss some of the key theoretical aspects of Critical Genre Analysis, three of which (see diagram 2 below) seem to be most crucial in marking a significant advancement in the genre analytical work undertaken in the last few decades: professional practice, interdiscursivity and multiperspective framework.

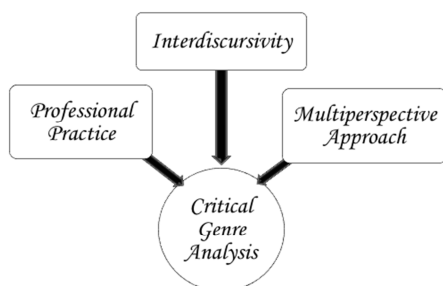


Diagram 2. Key Aspects of Interdiscursive Performance

Professional practices, though essentially non-discursive in nature, but invariably achieved through discursive means, are typically used to achieve the specific goals and objectives of a range of professional communities. By focusing on professional practice, CGA tends to pay more attention to the text-external factors that contribute significantly to the production, communication and negotiation of meaning as well as professional action in real-life disciplinary, institutional, organisational and more specific professional contexts, in addition to what goes into its production, reception and consumption of knowledge. It is important to realise that professional practices, on the one hand, are essentially the outcome of specific discursive procedures, and, on the other hand, are embedded in specific professional cultures, which lead to factors that are helpful in ensuring the ultimate pragmatic success of the professional action in question. Discursive procedures encourage focus on the roles of specific participants who are authorized to make a valid and appropriate contribution as part of a complex participatory mechanism, which determines what kind of contribution a particular participant is allowed to make, at what stage of the genre construction process; and on the other contributing genres that have a valid and justifiable input to a specific professional action. All these factors inevitably take place within the context of typical disciplinary and professional cultures within which a particular professional practice and genre are embedded. Thus by relating discursive actions to non-discursive or, more appropriately referred to as, text-external aspects of genre construction, CGA is in a position to account for the relevance and effectiveness of professional communication in typical contexts, which are inter-discursive in nature, and thus contribute to what can appropriately be viewed as interdiscursive performance. This extends the scope of analysis from genres as discursive products to interdiscursive performance through professional practice that all discursive acts tend to accomplish within specific disciplinary, institutional and more generally professional cultures.

To sum up, critical genre analysis is an attempt to extend genre theory beyond the analysis of semiotic resources used in professional genres to understand and clarify professional practices or actions in typical academic and professional contexts. Unlike CDA, CGA is a way of “demythifying” professional practice through the medium of genre. An interesting aspect of this analysis is that it focuses as much on generic artefacts as on professional practices, as much on what is explicitly or implicitly said in genres as on what is not said, as much on socially recognized communicative purposes as on the “private intentions” (Bhatia 1995) that professional writers tend to express in order to understand professional practices or actions of the members of corporations, institutions and professional organizations. In CGA, therefore, no professional, institutional, or organizational practices are assumed but negotiated. They seem to be in a constant struggle between competing interests. CGA with its focus on practice considers individual members of professional organizations, though bound by their common goals and objectives, as still having enough flexibility to incorporate “private intentions” within the concepts of professionally shared values, genre conventions, and professional cultures.

To conclude, unlike CDA, which is essentially interested in how social practices are discursively constructed to communicate ideological bias, in particular, social inequalities, and disempowerment of certain sections of society, CGA has its agenda in the demystification of the multiperspectival and multidimensional nature of professional practices as objectively, realistically, rationally and rigorously as resources permit. ‘Critical’ in genre theory thus reflects an attempt to be as objective as possible, rigorous in analytical procedures, integrating genre analysis and other relevant multiple perspectives and dimensions of professional genres by employing a range of methodological frameworks and procedures (Bhatia 2004), which include, but are not limited to, ethnographic (including specialist interviews and/or ‘convergent accounts’ of experienced members of the professional community in question), in order to explain or demystify, but not evaluate or criticise, specific professional practices. In principle, it is an attempt to seek all that we need to know about how expert professionals construct, interpret, use and exploit genre conventions in the performance of their everyday professional tasks in their specific disciplinary and interdisciplinary contexts.

## 6. References

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