

ISMGE 2020**II International Scientific and Practical Conference "Individual and Society in the
Modern Geopolitical Environment"****GENRES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ESL ACADEMIC AND
BUSINESS WRITING**

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Abstract

The paper considers one of the modern approaches to academic skills development in teaching English as a foreign language. The authors analyzed the literature including both Russian and international publications, on-line courses curriculum as well as English-teaching practice. Such concepts as discourse, style and genre are analyzed. In addition, the distinction between oral speech and oral reproduction of written speech, that is, memorized or read aloud text, is made. The paper also reads genre features as well as teaching academic and business writing in a technical university. The relevance of applying the basic principles of the genre approach is confirmed. It is proved that the implementation of the genre approach to teaching business writing leads to the understanding of clichés and structure of business letters as well as of their appropriateness in a particular situation. As for academic writing, this approach was implemented in teaching professional English for Master and Post-graduate students. Besides, satisfactory results were achieved in teaching Business correspondence to technical university students. The conclusion is made that the development of ESL skills is impossible without understanding what the academic and business styles and discourses are, and what genres represent them. We insist that for students, genre acquaintance can be relevant only in particular communicative situations, while a teacher should have a complete view of the genre system and possess general information concerning the categories and their content described in the paper.

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1. Introduction

According to modern trends in the globalization of education and training of a competitive specialist having good communicative skills, it is necessary to develop academic speaking and writing skills not only for students studying Humanities, but also for those trained in engineering specialties (Fedorova, 2014; Fedorova et al., 2019; Prom et al., 2019; Tsoupikova et al., 2019).

As it was noted by Fedorova (2014), “high level of language skills is the observance of its norms at all levels and creative usage of these norms in the process of professional, scientific and business communication” (p. 101). The purpose of developing such skills is to increase the performance of linguistic products in accordance with cognitive, communicative and epistemic functions the latest being the representation of scientific or business information.

2. Problem Statement

The process of developing academic and business language skills involves both the ability to understand and analyze specific texts of a certain professional discourse, as well as to produce them. In addition, developing oral language skills, including the rules of scientific or business dialogue and negotiations, as well as report presentation using visual and technical means is necessary, too. An important part of the general communicative competence is the genre competence of the linguistic personality (Dementiev, 2017; Sotova, 2017).

The genre approach to teaching ESL seems to be of high importance as there is a number of international conferences such as colloquium “Rethinking Genre”, held at Carleton University, Ottawa (Szitó, 1995), conference “Formation of genre and style thinking of a language personality by means of the Russian language”, held at Ivanovo State University in March 2013, and on-line courses discussing or based on this technology (Berkeley edX course, 2020 “Academic and Business writing”).

3. Research Questions

Let us now consider what discourse, style and genre are and the main features of the academic discourse.

3.1. Discourse, style, and genre

Since Aristotle, genres have been considered as a class of texts with particular set of features. However, modern linguists studying genres, their classification and functions note that as late as in the 1920-30s, an integral model of language learning in real speech reality was not yet developed (Fedorova, 2014, p. 102; Vinnikova & Fedorova, 2019). The modern theory of genres was mainly developed and influenced by Bahtin (1986). Researchers started to study genres depending on the situation and their implementation in real speech. That is why such concepts as discourse, rhetorical situation, and social context matter in understanding the nature of a genre (Karasik, 2020).

Discourse is a concept of Western linguistics, but the concept of functional style is still traditional for Russian Philology. Discourse is understood as a coherent text (hypertext, supertext) in combination with extralinguistic, paralinguistic, socio-cultural, psychological and other factors; a text taken in the

event aspect and including the paralinguistic accompaniment of speech (Russian language..., p.136). When considering the discourse from the point of view of the result, it is seen as a set of texts generated in the process of communication.

Functional style in Russian studies is usually understood as “a system of language units of all levels and methods of their selection, combination and use, united by a certain functional purpose and fixed by tradition for one or another of the most general spheres of social life” (Kozhina, 2003, p. 508).

The concept of speech genre, or rhetoric genre is one of the most important categories of pragmalinguistics, functional stylistics (in Russian context), and sociolinguistics. As a deep genre-forming factor, Bahtin (1979) considered social psychology and ideological systems-what is now called social forms of consciousness; he understood rhetoric genres as “relatively fixed types of *utterances* that are produced by each sphere of language use” (p. 250).

Miller and Fahnestock (2013) see genre as a meaningful pattern in “human symbolic production and interaction”. Ironically, being very much dependent on the context, a genre is still somewhat not very much active and flexible. According to Barley and Tolbert (1988), genres are “by-products of a history of negotiation among social actors that results in shares typifications which gradually acquire the moral and ontological status of taken-for-granted facts” (p. 8).

In our research, we use the general definition of a rhetoric genre given by the authors of the “Stylistic encyclopedia of the Russian language”: rhetoric genre is “a relatively fixed thematic, compositional and stylistic type of utterances (texts)” (Stylistic encyclopedia of the Russian language, 2019, p. 350). The main features of speech genres are the following: they are objective in relation to the individual, normative, historical, are developed in a certain time period in accordance with specific social lifestyle, has a function of integrating people into social life, are diverse, complex and heterogeneous, and are changeable and an open tor creativity.

The issue of genre repertoire is one of the unsolved, insufficiently studied in modern linguistics. At the same time, the main task of researchers is not to understand the final list of rhetoric genres, but to develop a complex system for analyzing speech genres, to classify them according to their discursive features and build their typology (Fedorova, 2014, p. 103). Another problem and task of the modern society is sharing the experience of communication rules via genres as fixed patterns of texts able to vary to an appropriate level.

3.2. Discourse example: academic discourse and its genres

Based on the idea of discourse in general, scientific discourse is a text in a broad sense, functioning in the academic (scientific, research) sphere of communication. Philosophically, Krotkov and Zuev (2012) considered the problem of classification and principles of academic discourse genres. Academic style is represented by several layers: scientific (academic), scientific-educational, scientific-technical, and popular science. Their detailed characteristics, as well as a fairly complete description of scientific genres, are described in the works of Russian linguists (Kozhina, 2003; Salimovsky & Yarullin, 2017). The main genres of scientific communication are listed in table 1.

Table 01. Academic written and oral genres

The genres of academic written speech	The genres of academic oral speech
Monograph, research article, scientific and technical text (instructions, manuals, safety rules, etc.), patents, dissertation, scientific and educational prose (textbooks, teaching AIDS, etc.), abstracts, summaries, reports, lectures, discussions, genres of popular science literature	Monological: report, review, presentation of course paper or diploma
	Dialogical: seminar scientific discussion and academic conversation

This functional style is characterized by the use of special scientific and terminological vocabulary, as well as the use of graphical information (formulas, graphs, diagrams, tables). The primary form of scientific style implementation is written, but recently the role of oral scientific communication has been increasing. Therefore, more important is developing academic writing and academic oral skills.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this article is to analyse the main concepts and the possibilities of implementing the genre approach while teaching professional, academic and business English.

5. Research Methods

As many other researchers and language teachers, Miller considers genres in science and technology as well as in pedagogy. Her main finding is that one of the most important applications of genre analysis to science and technology, we agreed, is in teaching (Miller & Fahnestock, 2013). A lot of scientists agree with the researcher and try to use imitation technologies to help students acquire the social experience through genres. For example, Kamberelis (1999) presents his detailed study concerning the genre understanding among schoolchildren. He coded the texts according to structural and textual features. After the children wrote their texts, they were also asked to prove that the text is written in this or that genre. His main finding is that the differentiation of genres children acquire mostly depends on the tasks they have.

The most important methods and techniques of teaching textual content in the genre aspect are the following: choosing a speech genre, determining its features, implementing this knowledge in practice, expanding the genre repertoire. One of the key competencies in modern educational standards is communicative, which implies the ability to logically correctly, argumentatively and clearly build oral and written speech, prepare reports and publications on scientific research (for undergraduates), writing reviews and reports, recommendations on the practical use of research results (for undergraduates).

6. Findings

We applied the genre approach into teaching Academic English and Business correspondence in Omsk State Technical University.

6.1. Academic English

While working with Omsk State Technical University students, we successfully apply the genres approach; teach genres and their variations (sub-genres) features, texts perception and production. In 2019-2020 the author's course was developed, including 4 blocks of 3 parts each containing a multimedia slide lecture, a test integrated into a slide lecture, a video recording of a practical lesson, and an interactive simulator. Interaction technology increases the involvement of participants in solving applied problems. Educational materials have a clear modular structure, consistent with the working program of the discipline; they include theoretical, practical, and testing materials as well as a high degree of visualization (illustrations, diagrams, graphs, animated objects, video clips, etc.). We implemented all the free access materials during the on-line educational period which started in the world in March 2020. The course is used by master and Post-graduate students as well as by the second-year bachelor students when they are working with scientific articles (Professional English course, 2019).

Besides, some course books were written. The first one is the book on academic writing including 10 sections based on the genre approach. The purpose of the tutorial is to develop skills of scientific foreign language communication: information analysis, abstract writing, essay writing, report preparation and presentation. The tasks offered in the textbook are based on best practices in the field of teaching foreign languages and are designed on the basis of actual scientific texts. As a basic lesson, we offer a lesson "My research", which includes the main General scientific vocabulary and exercises on the topic. The rest of the lessons are devoted to the grammatical structure of sentences, note-taking, mini-sagas, writing abstracts, describing graphs, essays and report writing, writing an article, and basics of academic speaking.

6.2. Business correspondence

The same on-line teaching period mentioned above has proved the possibility of using the genre approach to teaching business English. At this course, such genres are studied and tried by students: enquiry, offer, order, complaint, CV, recommendation, report, memo, action plan and action minutes, and some others. During the course, over 60 students had practice in business writing and achieved pretty good results.

In addition, the book "Business and scientific communications" were written. It consists of two modules containing materials on the development of communication skills in a foreign language. Authentic texts on the topics "Companies", "Employment", "Academic writing", "Business conferences" and "Academic speaking", as well as lexical, grammatical and communicative tasks developed on their basis that meet the requirements of the work program are presented. It is intended for undergraduates of all forms of education and areas of training in the discipline "Business and scientific communications".

7. Conclusion

Thus, we must insist that the development of ESL skills is impossible without understanding what the academic and business styles and discourses are, and what genres represent them. The genre approach should be used especially in teaching academic and business writing, though some oral genres are also fixed and can be used in implementing various teaching techniques. When, for students, genre

acquaintance can be relevant only in relation to certain situations and communicative tasks, a teacher should have a complete view of the genre system and possess general information concerning the categories and their content described above.

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