

GENRE ANALYSIS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE (ISO 9000) DOCUMENTATION

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Abstract. The paper presents the results of cross-sectional empirical research exploring the network of genres in the quality assurance domain. The theoretical basis for this research has been to a large extent grounded in the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) genre school. The empirical research method is a two-staged discourse analysis. During the first stage the data collection tools were semi-structured interviews with four Lloyd Register Quality Assurance (LRQA) auditors aimed at identifying the recurrent genres pertinent to the domain and describing the social context in which they occur. The second stage involved the genre analysis, namely, moves and steps analysis, in order to define the communicative aims and rhetorical organization of assessment reports. The obtained results highlight the significance of the social context for conducting the genre analysis in the quality assurance domain. They reveal that the genres in the network have hierarchical relations, with the quality standard being the dominating one. Moreover, discursive practices facilitate uncovering constitutive intertextual relations and rhetorical organisation. The topicality of the theme is determined by the scarcity of previous research in the quality assurance domain and the needs to train managers to develop their communicative language competence.

Key words: quality assurance, genre analysis, moves and steps, intertextuality

INTRODUCTION

In highly competitive market conditions, quality assurance has infiltrated most business domains aiming not only at product quality but also at developing, implementing and monitoring a quality management system within an enterprise which, in turn, considerably increases the target audience of the present research. All level managers are involved in the quality assurance genres processing which is required for documenting the procedures, ensuring knowledge management and improving performance. The empirical findings of the present study reveal that the existing research in the domain mostly focuses on the implementation of the quality management in a certain business domain or entity, listing the pertinent genres. However, their intertextual relations, rhetorical organisation and typical linguistic features have not been explored. The interviewed assessors (auditors) admit that they use sample papers and the existing forms to create new reports after audits and do not have conventions for documentation compilation.

Thus, the abovementioned circumstances have determined the twofold aim of the research which is:

- to describe the social context of the quality assurance domain;
- to conduct a genre analysis of the assessment reports in order to identify their communicative purposes, intertextual relations and specify the rhetorical organization patterns.

As stated by the research participants, the research findings may be applicable to improve the professional communicative competence of quality assurance managers and specialists by designing a course and materials for in-house training to enable acquiring communicative language competence and successful functioning in a meaningful job-related context.

GENRE SCHOOLS

In contemporary linguistics, the development of the genre concept has significantly been facilitated by the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), New Rhetoric School and the ESP movement. The founders and supporters have shaped the approach from sentence-based through discourse-based and rhetorical to social by analysing the communicative event and linguistic features pertaining to it, which is reflected in the present study.

The SFL genre theory or Australian genre theory emerged roughly at the same time as the ESP and New Rhetoric studies; however, the three theories have developed independently having different background and implications at their basis. According to SFL researchers, systemic functional linguistics reflects the relationship between forms and their functions in social settings. The linguistic forms are mutually influenced by the social context, defined by Halliday as field (the activity or the domain), tenor (the participants involved) and mode (the channel of communication) (Halliday, 1978; Halliday and Hasan, 1989). The recent SFL research activities (Rose, 2012) propose a framework of stages and phases in genre analysis, resembling the one suggested by Swales (1990, 2004), e.g. *Create A Research Space (CARS)* model or moves and steps framework for genre analysis which proves the fact that the boundaries between the tenets of these schools are vague (as presented by Acevedo in the 2nd LinC Summer School in Systemic Functional Linguistics Workshop in Cardiff School of English, Communication and Philosophy).

Researchers in ESP, in their turn, have been interested in genre as a tool for analyzing and teaching spoken and written language required of non-native speakers in academic and professional settings (Bhatia, 1993; Flowerdew, 1993; Dudley-Evans, 1988; Swales, 1990). The scholars highlight the significance of the communicative events driven by their communicative purposes and characterised by typical formal structures recognised by other discourse participants.

Hyland (2002) finds similarities between ESP and New Rhetoric School in terms of Bakhtinian *dialogism* and Kristeva's *intertextuality*. Moreover, Bloor (1998) claims that with its emphasis on the communicative purpose and formal properties of texts, the ESP approach might be seen as an application of SFL (cited in Hyland, 2002: 115). Similar to SFL, the ESP scholars are driven by applied implications.

Being an ESP practitioner, the author of the paper adheres to the views of the ESP School as the guiding principles complementing the theoretical framework with Martin's (2000) concepts since social context and functional language use within formalised structures are equally important for the present research allowing one to look not only into contextual relations, but also into recurrent structural elements and the textualisation processes of the genre.

1 THE CONCEPT OF GENRE

The definition of *genre* from the point of view of applied linguistics, seminal for this study, was first crystallised by Swales, who correlated genre to its communicative event expressing a set of communicative purpose(s) and perceived by the discourse community (Swales, 1990). Later definitions do not differ much, for instance, Roseberry (1997) asserts that genre as a property of a text is identified as a sequence of moves or segments where each move accomplishes some part of the overall communicative purpose of the text.

Bruce (2008) summarised the twofold approach to genre and genre analysis and distinguished (a) *social genre*, and (b) *cognitive genre*, the former relating to communicative purposes, the latter focusing on the internal organization. For the present study, both the genre communicative aims and rhetorical organization are of equal importance, thus the theories arising from different genre schools should not be regarded in isolation.

Bhatia highlights the complexity of genre analysis by noting that 'genre studies range from a close linguistic study of texts as product' to a dynamic manifestation of professional discursive processes (Bhatia, 2002: 14).

Therefore, a thorough and consistent exploration of wider linguistic context and context modeling should be provided and genre intertextual relations have to be investigated.

2 GENRE ANALYSIS

To deal with the emerging genres in the rapidly developing business domains to which quality assurance belongs, Bhatia proposes to place the given genre in a *social context*, involving the discourse community, i.e. the subject matter experts, users, writers of these and related genres (Bhatia, 1998: 22-24). Afterwards, the situational/ contextual analysis has to be further refined by defining the speaker/writer of the text, their relationships and goals, identifying occupational placement of the community and the network of surrounding texts that may form

the background to this particular genre. Moving on to lower levels, he subdivides the linguistic analysis into three levels: analysis of lexico-grammatical features, analysis of text-patterning or textualisation and structural interpretation of the text-genre.

Considering the external features of genre and placing genre in the situational context, Swales (2004) attempts to systematize concepts and processes related to it and proposed several terminological clarifications, the umbrella term being '*genre constellations*'. They include *genre hierarchies*, *genre sets*, *genre chains*, *genre networks/ systems*, and *sub-genre*.

According to Swales (2004: 13-14), *hierarchy* implies ordering different genres in the order of importance and prestige, 'their perceived quality differences and rankings' (ibid.: 18). The ranking may differ in various spheres and geographical locations.

Placing genres in the logical order of occurrence, 'their chronological ordering, especially if one genre is antecedent for another' (ibid.: 18) forms *genre chains*. Temporary or individual ordering combines into *genre sets* (ibid.: 23), with communicative event(s) being central. Other scholars (e.g. Berkenkotter, 2001) use the term '*system*', applying it to the intermediate level of units of institutions.

The concept of genre networks has been grounded in the Bakhtinian notion of *dialogism*, which is a vivid example of the fact that genres do not stand in isolation. As Swales (2004) writes, 'they turn out to be the totality of genres available in a particular sector' (ibid.: 22).

The concept was further developed by Kristeva (1980) and the term *intertextuality* was proposed. She refers to texts in terms of two axes: a horizontal axis connecting the author and the reader of a text, and a vertical axis, which connects the text to other texts (ibid.: 69). She argues that rather than confining our attention to the structure of a text we should study its 'structuration' (how the structure came into being). This involves locating it 'within the totality of previous or synchronic texts' (ibid.).

Fairclough (1992) mentions two types of intertextuality, i.e. *manifest*, where the source is explicitly mentioned, and *constitutive*, where the source is kept hidden, the latter being of importance for establishing extra-textual connections among genres.

The description of the social context of genre is followed by identifying its *communicative aims*. Bhatia (2001: 81) notes that they can be 'specified at various levels based on an increasingly delicate degree of specificity, which makes it possible for genres to be identified either narrowly or more broadly, depending upon the objectives of the investigation', thus explaining the nature of moves and steps in rhetorical analysis.

Next line of research, according to Hyland (2002: 116), is to explore lexico-grammar and discursive patterns to identify the 'recognisable structural identity' of genre, i.e. '*generic integrity*' (Bhatia, 1999: 22).

Each genre may consist of smaller parts with an independent communicative purpose, i.e. sub-genre. Based on the exploration of the introductions of research articles, Swales (1990, 2004) developed and later modified his moves theory, the move corresponding to a single communicative event with a certain communicative purpose and steps being structural objectives to achieve it within one sub-genre or genre. He proposed a structural framework, commonly known as *CARS model* (Swales, 1990), consisting of the following moves:

- establishing a territory;
- establishing a niche;
- occupying the niche. (cited in Bhatia, 1998: 83)

Exploring the generic integrity further, Martin relates the communicative aims with texture, claiming that 'genre is concerned with systems of social processes, where the principles for relating social processes are to do with texture- the ways in which field, mode and tenor variables are phased together in a text' (Martin, 2000: 12). Following Halliday's theory, Martin (2000) proposes to identify metafunctions with *field*, *mode* and *tenor*, i.e. ideational, textual and interpersonal respectively, claiming that texture is linked with discursive processes. His rhetorical organisation patterns are associated and aligned with metafunctions as well. The basic division is between *particulate*, *prosodic* and *periodic* structure within the genre, of which particulate will be further considered revealing the relations between the communicative aims and rhetorical organisation (ibid.).

Particulate structure corresponds to ideational meaning. It organises a text segmentally into orbital or serial patterns, which is a modification of thematic progression, i.e. orbital has one theme and several rhemes, or constant theme progression (Danes, 1974; Firbas, 1974; Halliday and Hasan, 1976; Halliday, 1993), whereas serial ideally has one theme and one rheme and progresses linearly (Martin, 2000).

To conclude, presently there are three main schools involved in genre analysis, i.e. SFL, ESP, and New Rhetoric Studies. Their tenets overlap and all of them are driven by various applied implications. The joint definition of genre considers it as a social event with clearly distinct communicative purposes, rhetorical structure and lexico-grammatical means accounting for generic integrity, recognised by the members of discourse communities. Although conventionalism is the key principle in this definition, genre dynamism, hybridity and embedding should not be disregarded as it is dictated by a dynamic complexity of discursive practices of professional and workplace communities. Genre should be distinguished from a text type by recognizing the external features of a text. In genre analysis, linguists propose to undertake a holistic approach and consider a number of perspectives in an integrated manner. The author intends to describe the social context of the genre in question, proceed with identification of the communicative aim and move and step analysis, and unveil textualisation processes pertinent to them.

METHODS

The present research is of qualitative nature as it is aimed at describing systematised language use in a professional setting, emphasising the wider linguistic and local situational (social) contexts.

In order to address the aims set prior to commencing the research activities, i.e. to describe the social context in which the quality assurance genres occur and identify their communicative purposes, intertextual relations and rhetorical organization, a two-staged discourse analysis was conducted. The first stage comprised semi-structured interviews with three assessors and one lead assessor at LRQA Riga and enabled the author to describe the discursive processes in the domain implementing Bhatia's (1998, 2002) theoretical considerations, identify the recurrent genres, organize them into a hierarchical network employing Swales (2004) framework and trace their intertextual relations applying Kristeva's (1980) and Fairclough's (1992) concepts. The second stage involved Swales' (1990) moves and steps analysis as well as Martin's (2000) rhetorical pattern analysis.

Sampling of the research is characterized as *homogeneous* and *typical* (Dornyei, 2007: 127) and was determined by feasibility. The interviews contained one iteration. The obtained data determined the corpus composition for further genre analysis. It comprised ISO: 9001 Quality Assurance Standard, 5 quality manuals, 5 quality policies, 5 assessment reports. The Quality Assurance Standard, manuals, policies (designed in software development, road building and metalwork companies in Latvia) and assessment reports were used to describe the social context. Genre analysis of assessment reports consisting of 14,887 tokens was undertaken; other genres were eliminated due to corporate non-disclosure policies. Moreover, the abovementioned genre was selected since it is used by the discourse community participants at all levels, i.e. by external assessors, company top management, quality manager and heads of relevant departments on-site.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

1 DESCRIBING SOCIAL CONTEXT OF GENRE

Summarising the results of the semi-structured interviews and describing the situational context, the assessors claim that quality assurance (QA), in its broadest sense, is any action taken to prevent quality problems. In practice, this means devising systems for carrying out tasks which directly affect the product, service or management system quality. ISO 9000 is a series of QA standards issued first in 1987 to systematize quality requirements and reduce the number of audits, thus ensuring further research activities. The interviewed assessors state that in order to implement a quality system for an organization, firstly, it has to be developed; secondly, it has to be appropriately documented (in the form of quality manual, policies, procedures, and reference information); thirdly, the staff

has to be informed, instructed, and adequately trained to use it. Finally, it has to be certified and afterwards recertified by an external authorized body to ensure the system efficiency. Refining the situational context, the key documentation drawn up in the process of quality system design and implementation is a quality standard, a quality manual, policies, procedures, external auditors’ report (AR) and a certificate of approval.

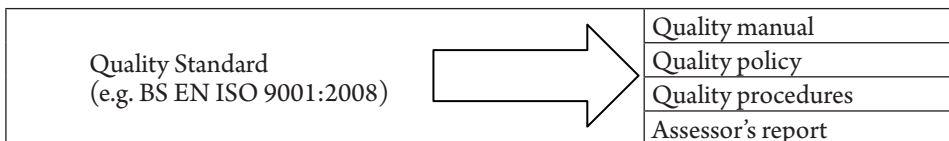
A quality standard is issued by the International Organisation for Standardization and is available through national standards bodies. Its target audience is quality managers, chief operational officers, chief executive officers, quality consultants, internal and external auditors. The overall communicative aim is to set requirements for a company to comply with while implementing a quality management system within the frames of management responsibility, resource management, product realization, measurement, analysis and improvement (Standard ISO 9001, sections 4-8). The standard predefines the creation of a quality policy (QP) and quality manual (QM) with the following sub-genres: control of documents (4.2.3), control of records (4.2.4), internal audits (8.2.2), control of nonconforming product/ service (8.3), corrective action (8.5.2) and preventive action (8.5.3). The quality policy is a long-term strategic document jointly devised by top management and quality consultants to set the quality aims and objectives of the organization and define the roles of departments and personnel as well as quality benchmarks ensuring quality. It has to be communicated throughout the company and understood by personnel at all managerial levels.

Quality procedures are developed jointly by a quality manager and responsible staff (heads of departments, team leads, specialists) to detail work processes and provide clear instructions or action points. Record-keeping and documenting enable one to reduce errors through the clarity of instructions and revisit the information for further reference, ensure knowledge management within the organization in case of personnel turnover, act as a management tool for control and planning.

An external assessor’s report is written after the audit when a company seeks to obtain the certificate of approval and is sent to an independent expert within the certification body and the company top management under consideration.

Organising the above mentioned genres and sub-genres into a hierarchy, quality standard is undoubtedly a dominating one, with other being subordinate, as it predetermines the communicative purposes and content of other genres as well as guides their development.

Table 1 Hierarchy of genres in QA domain



When ranking the genres chronologically in order to form a genre chain, the following is obtained:

1. Quality standard is issued and explored by the stakeholders of the discourse community.
2. Quality policy is developed by the top management with the help of quality experts and consultants.
3. A more elaborate description of the company vision and activities regarding quality is prepared in the quality manual.
4. Quality procedures reflect consistent actions of the personnel in certain job related situations.
5. External assessor's report is drawn up to review the quality management system operation and overall efficiency as well as the state company's compliance with standard requirements and non-conformances.

Considering the company individual ordering and forming a genre set, control of documents (4.2.3), control of records (4.2.4), internal audits (8.2.2), control of nonconforming product/service (8.3), corrective action (8.5.2) and preventive action (8.5.3) may exist as separate sub-genres (QM 1, QM4) or a part of quality manual depending on the size of the company (QM 2, QM 3, QM 5).

Commenting upon the genre *manifest intertextuality*, the quality assurance documentation is mutually interrelated with the company's internal documentation, e.g. job descriptions, reports, agendas, minutes, and logs as these genres serve as audit evidence to track the system efficiency (e.g. 'Audit trails and sources of evidence: fire system technical inspections registration journal (from 01.01.2011, supplier SIA xxx), quality and environmental manual (03.01.2011), quality and environmental manual chapter 04 (03.01.2011), organization chart (03.01.2011), work rules, training plan for 2011, amendment No5 to internal training protocol, iekšējo komunikāciju organizēšana/internal communication management'). (AR 3) If the company undergoes additional certification, other documentation systems, e.g. environmental management system (ISO 14000), occupational health and safety management system (ISO 18000 or OHSAC) are easily integrated (e.g. 'Audit trails and sources of evidence: environmental program for 2011 (05.07.2011), identification and evaluation of work environment factors, environmental risks evaluation policy, emergency evacuation training log, contract for infrastructure modernization No KPFI-6/40 in order to reduce emissions'). (AR 4)

Constitutive intertextuality, which is not explicitly expressed by linguistic means, can only be identified after the situational context has been investigated. For instance, the intertextual relations between internal documentation, i.e. job descriptions, reports, agendas and minutes are not reciprocal, so it is not possible to identify the intertextual dependence of the abovementioned genres on quality assurance documentation. For instance, analysing training logs

or minutes outside the situational context, the intertextual relations cannot be traced. However, having explored the situational context, it has become apparent that they are used to ensure knowledge transfer among peers and are used by HR management to control the competence level. Thus, human resource documentation is treated as an integral part of quality assurance documentation, and intertextual relations are established.

2 DESCRIBING GENRE RHETORICAL ORGANISATION

Turning to the genre structural description, text-patterning and lexico-grammatica features, the author intends to describe the assessor's report in detail as it contains an intertextual reference to the above mentioned genres and reflects on their efficient implementation and operation. Five assessment reports created by the LRQA assessors were analysed. Each report consists of four sub-genres, i.e. an executive report (having the most complex rhetorical structure), an assessment findings log, an assessment schedule and an assessment plan. (AR 1-5) Conducting the moves analysis, the following moves and steps were singled out in all the reports under consideration:

Table 2 Move and step analysis of assessor's report

Executive report
Move 1: Establishing a territory Step 1: claiming the assessment outcome Step 2: claiming the system effectiveness and continual improvement
Move 2: Establishing a niche Step 1: Outlining the assessment scope Step 1a: Outlining the assessment activities and persons involved
Move 3a: Occupying the niche (x4 covering different spheres) Step 1: Reviewing the audit trails and sources of evidence Step 2: Evaluating the audit trails and sources of evidence and outlining conclusions Assessment Findings Log
Move 3b: Occupying the niche Step 1: Claiming the assessment finding Step 2: Reviewing the corrective action
Assessment schedule
Move 3c: Occupying the niche Step 1: Outlining the process or status Step 2: Outlining details of the next visit
Assessment plan
Move 3c: Occupying the niche Step 1: Outlining the assessment routines

When analysing the rhetorical organization patterns of each step and observing how ideational meaning was created, the predominant pattern turned out to be serial in almost all steps. (AR 1-5) The orbital pattern was observed only

in move 3a, step 2 outlining conclusions due to the causal nature of the content. (AR 1-5) Interpersonal meaning was traced in move 3b, step 2: reviewing the corrective action, but the nature of social relations was performative as some corrective actions were required from the company. Textual meaning is achieved by organizing information considering the logical, chronological and causal patterns, with the chronological one dominating, creating coherence. This phenomenon is explained by the nature of the communicative event and the communicative aim. (AR 1-5)

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions have been drawn, resulting from the present research. Genres in the quality assurance domain constitute a wide network in predominantly written mode, the key being a quality standard, a quality manual, policies, procedures, an external assessor's report and a certificate of approval. The genres in the network possess hierarchical structure with the standard being the dominating one. They are identified on the basis of conventionalised features together with the analysis of wider linguistic and social context. Exploring the situational context enables us to describe discursive practices and establish the manifest and constitutive intertextual relation, organise the genres chronologically and observe the organization of genre set which is influenced by the size of the company. The move and step analysis revealed the identical genre organization that may be explained by high conventionalism and rigid requirements. Identifying the communicative aims at different levels helps to trace typical rhetorical patterns bound to these aims and the manifestation of textual metafunction. The serial rhetorical pattern to express the ideational language metafunction dominates since the activities in the communicative event unfold sequentially. The orbital pattern is observed to disclose causal relations in only one step. The interpersonal relations between the members of discourse community are traced in two steps, when reviewing the audit trails and outlining the corrective and preventive actions; however, the nature of the communicative event and these relations is performative.

A similar research procedure may be undertaken to analyse other genres in the domain after signing non-disclosure agreements with the stakeholders to make the corpus more representative. Further research activities might also comprise a detailed analysis of lexico-grammatical features of each move and step to demonstrate their connection with the manifestation of language metafunctions.

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