

GENRE AS DIVERSITY, AND RHETORICAL MODE AS UNITY IN LANGUAGE USE

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Abstract

Current theorizing on genre within Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) as well as other traditions of genre analysis have not paid much attention to the interrelationship between the notions of rhetorical mode and genre. In this paper I argue that rhetorical mode may be an important notion in genre studies and that it should thus be foregrounded. I elaborate on the different linguistic and functional status of genres and rhetorical modes attempting to show that it is essential for text/discourse analysis to draw a clear distinction between them. Within this perspective I propose that while genres stand for diversity and fit the notion of specific text type identifiable by specific format and used in specific social contexts to fulfil specific functions, rhetorical modes stand for unity as they constitute general patterns of language organisation strategically used by authors/writers as linguistic resources in the creation of specific genres. I illustrate the discussion by analysing the strategic use of clause relations as rhetorical modes occurring in a specific genre, namely, a fable. The paper should be relevant for discourse analysis and genre studies within SFL and other genre traditions as well as for language teachers involved with reading and writing.

Key words: genre, rhetorical mode, genre analysis, systemic functional linguistics, clause relations.

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0. Introduction

Systemic functional linguistics (SFL) offers us both a theory of language and a method of text analysis (Halliday, 1975, 1994; Eggins, 1994). As a theory, SFL allows us to look at language as a multifunctional semiotic system, i.e., a system for making ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings by choosing among lexicogrammatical forms available in the language. As a method, SFL offers us a number of ways – of greater or lesser complexity – to analyse texts in terms of how individuals create meanings by their specific choices of lexicogrammatical elements which are conveyed in specific genres, these being used in recognized contexts of situation within different contexts of culture. In fulfilling its analytical purposes, SFL poses two main questions: “How do people use language?” and “How is language structured for use?” (Eggins, 1994: 2). The answer to the first broad question explores the fact that we use language in the form of complete texts within specific situational contexts instantiated within encompassing cultural contexts. The answer to the second one explores the fact that language is structured as a gamut of genres of texts which are characterized by recognizable purposes and schematic structures, and which are almost as numerous as the social practices which people get involved in. The theoretical and methodological apparatuses of SFL allow us to look efficiently at texts in terms of these broad questions, specifying how language is used – how it relates to the contexts of situation and culture as a connotative semiotic, and how it is structured as a denotative semiotic instrument of social interaction (Hjelmslev, apud Halliday and Martin, 1993: 37, 49).

In spite of its undeniable theoretical and methodological strength to deal with lexicogrammatical structures of texts – which realize ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings both in relation to the context of situation (where texts are examined in terms of Field, Tenor and Mode¹) and the context of culture (where texts are examined as genres) – SFL would profit from more explicitly exploring what I want to refer to as rhetorical modes, to complement genre. In this paper I

discuss and illustrate crucial differences between the two notions, genre and rhetorical mode, suggesting that rhetorical modes can be incorporated as a tool in the analysis of genres in SFL and in other traditions of genre analysis. The paper unfolds into three parts: elaboration and illustration of the differences between genre and rhetorical mode in different genres; analysis of clause relations as rhetorical modes in a fable as a specific genre; and final remarks with general observations about the relevance of the proposal.

1. Genres and rhetorical modes

Recent work within the area of genre studies (e.g. Paltridge, 1996; Paltridge, forthcoming) has attempted to establish a clear difference between genre and what has variously been called “text types” (Biber, 1988), “kinds of discourse” (Brooks and Warren, 1972: 44-45), “rhetorical functions” (Jordan, 1997), and “rhetorical modes” (Fairclough, 1992; Winkler and McCuen, 1995; Meurer, 2000). In order to explore the oppositions between the two notions, I adopt the terms *genre* and *rhetorical mode*, which will be subsequently discussed.

1.1 Genres

Genres may be illustrated by specific kinds of texts such as abstracts, book reviews, business letters, cartoons, casual opinion, classified announcements, discussions, essays, film reviews, instructions, interviews, memos, obituaries, personal recounts, personal letters, news reports, novels, owner’s manuals, research reports, short biographies, sonnets, university calendars, etc. An increasingly important notion outside literary studies in the last 20 years, the term *genre* has been variously defined to capture different foci of interest within different traditions of research. Thus, genre studies have developed within the tradition represented by the seminal work by Bakhtin (translated in 1986), the work headed by Swales (1981, 1990) in ESP, the work represented by Miller’s (1984; 1994) now classical

paper in the New Rhetoric, and the research within SFL by, for example, Martin (1984, 1989), Christie (1999), and Eggins (1994).

In a nutshell, for Bakhtin (1986), a genre is defined as follows:

Language is realized in the form of individual concrete utterances (oral and written) by participants in the various areas of human activity. [...] Each separate utterance is individual, of course, but each sphere in which language is used develops its own relatively stable types of these utterances. These we may call speech genres. (p. 60).

In the area of ESP, genres are “oral and written text types defined by their formal properties as well as by their communicative purposes within social contexts” (Hyon 1996: 693). The focus has been on *structural move analysis* and *steps* as developed by Swales (1990) to describe formal characteristics of texts either concerning global organization or sentence-level features to be used as materials for university level students.

In the new rhetoric tradition, the definition of genre is centered on action. As proposed by Miller (1984; 1994: 23), “a theoretically sound definition of genre must be centered not on the substance or the form of the discourse but on the action it is used to accomplish”. The focus is on the use of ethnographic techniques to understand how discourse reflects the rhetorical experience of language users as they create and interpret texts “offering thick descriptions of academic and professional contexts surrounding genres and the actions texts perform within these situations” (Hyon 1996: 696). As Miller (1994) states, rhetorical action is seen as reflecting rhetorical practice.

In systemic functional linguistics (SFL), as developed especially by Martin and co-researchers in Australia, a genre is seen as “a staged, goal oriented, purposeful activity in which speakers engage as members of our culture, such as the staged activities of making a dentist appointment, buying vegetables, telling a story, writing an essay, applying for a job, writing a letter to the editor, inviting someone for

dinner, and so on" (Martin 1984:24). Genres are seen as shaped by the context of culture and by Field, Tenor and Mode, key features of the context of situation which constrain or determine the register to be used. The focus until the beginning of the 1990's was on modeling form, function and social context, using a systemic functional perspective (Halliday, 1975; 1994) and concentrating mainly on genres used in primary school, secondary school and non-professional workplace (Hyon 1996: 697). More recently this work has extended into other institutional settings including the professional workplace (Christie and Martin, 1997).

In an attempt to encapsulate the definitions provided within these various traditions, I propose to define genres as reasonably stable types of text, either oral or written, formal or informal, which can be recognized because of their rhetorical structure and function, that is, their organization and purpose. It is important to pinpoint that genres are characterized not so much by a *fixed* set of denotative semiotic components – made up of linguistic and, frequently, also visual elements – in a given sequential organization, but by co-occurring *clusters*² of both denotative and connotative semiotic components used to achieve given purposes in recognized social milieus. Associated with specific social environments, genres may either reinforce, reproduce or challenge different social relations, identities and ways of representing "reality" (Fairclough, 1992; Meurer, 2000; 2002). These more socially related aspects of genre have not yet been extensively investigated in SFL or other genre analysis traditions, and they deserve further attention. Nevertheless, this perspective will only be mentioned in passing in this paper.

1.2 Rhetorical modes

Having been variously referred to as "text types", "rhetorical functions" or "kinds of discourse", rhetorical modes have sometimes been conflated with the notion of genre. For example, it is not clear in Brooks and Warren's (1972) classic work in modern rhetoric whether they are discussing genres or rhetorical modes when they elaborate on *forms of discourse* and *kinds of discourse*:

There are four basic natural needs that are fulfilled in discourse. We want to explain or inform about something. We want to convince somebody. We want to tell what a thing looked like – or sounded like, or felt like. We want to tell what happened. These natural needs determine the four *forms of discourse*. Each need represents, then, an intention that is fulfilled in a particular *kind of discourse*.

The four *kinds of discourse* are exposition, argument, description, and narration. Let us linger a little longer on the kind of intention that each represents.

In the first of these, *exposition*, the intention is to explain something, for instance to make some idea clear to the reader, to analyze a situation, to define a term, to give directions. The intention, in short, is to inform.

In *argument*, the intention is to make somebody change his mind, his attitude, his point of view, or his feelings.

In *description*, the intention is to make the reader as vividly aware as possible of what the writer has perceived through his senses (or his imagination), to give him the “feel” of things described, the quality of a direct experience. The thing described may be anything that we can grasp through the senses, a natural scene, a city street, a cat or a racehorse, the face of a person, the sound of a voice, the odor of an attic, a piece of music.

In *narration*, the intention is to present an event to the reader – what happened and how it happened. The event itself may be grand or trivial, a battle or a ball game, a presidential campaign or a picnic; but whatever it is, the intention is to give the impression of movement in time, to give some immediate impression of the event, the sense of witnessing an action. (Brooks and Warren, 1972, p. 44-45, my italics)

In order to distinguish rhetorical modes from genres, I propose to define rhetorical modes as similar textual strategies, differently

clustering in different genres, which are utilized by writers as a means to textualize specific parts and functions of their texts. Thus, rhetorical modes are recognized patterns of textual resources, which are available for the production of specific genres. The rhetorical organization of specific genres is realized by the set of rhetorical modes that a text producer may use in order to indicate to readers how his/her text is organized and what the functional relationship is between the several parts of the text and their relationship with the textual architecture as a whole.

Rhetorical modes, as I would like to propose, subdivide into two major categories: traditional rhetorical modes and organizational rhetorical modes. The first category comprises the textual strategies of exposition, argumentation, description, and narration as developed in rhetoric (e.g., Brooks and Warren, 1972), including subcategories, such as illustration, classification, explanation, process, and definition. The second major category, organizational rhetorical modes, comprise textual organizing semantic principles that may further subdivide into macrostructural rhetorical modes and microstructural rhetorical modes. I want to propose that macrostructural rhetorical modes include clause relations which constitute Basic Text Structures, such as the conventional textual patterns Situation-Evaluation, Hypothetical-Real, and General-Particular (Winter, 1977, 1982, 1986; Hoey, 1983; Meurer, 1996; 1997). Microstructural rhetorical modes include conventional semantic relations, such as matching (Winter, 1982; Hoey, 1983), prospection or prediction (Tadros, 1985, 1994), and retrospection or labelling (Francis, 1986, 1994). In section 2, I will explore aspects of clause relations, illustrating their impact in the analysis of a specific genre. The relationship between rhetorical modes and genres is represented in Figure 1.

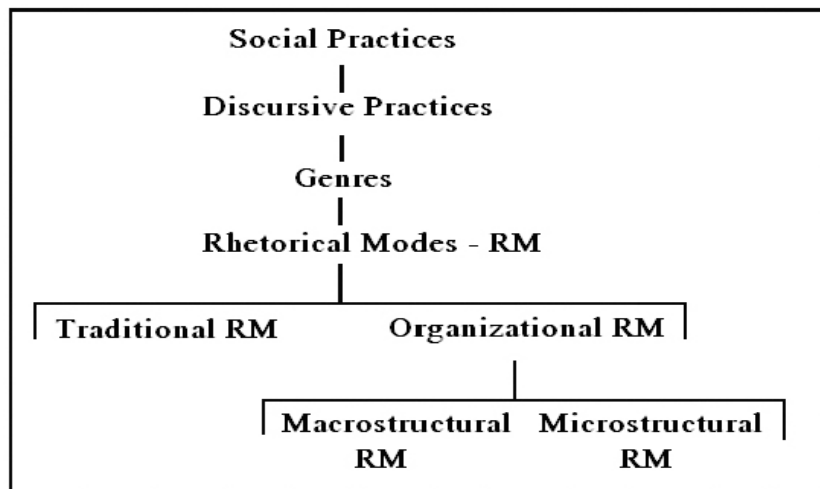


FIGURE 1 – Relationship diagram of rhetorical modes in genres

The broad categories of rhetorical modes allow us to visualize recurrent patterns of language organization and function *within* different genres. In other words, genres, our stock of reasonably stable, complete forms of discursive practices, are instantiated by typical clusters of rhetorical modes thus allowing us to engage in culturally recognized social practices.

Looked at as linguistic phenomena, genres may stand for diversity while rhetorical modes stand for unity. Diversity and unity, respectively, derive from the fact that, while genres proliferate as forms of social practice, rhetorical modes are repeatedly used – though in different clusterings – in different genres. In addition, diversity results from the creation of new genres and thus new forms of language use as, for instance, we witness in the language of the Internet; unity, in contrast, results from the recognition of existing patterns even when they are used in the construction of new genres. Thus, as also argued in Paltridge (1996, forthcoming), we must not confuse genres and rhetorical modes.

In the next subsection, I will further illustrate the interaction between rhetorical modes and genres of texts.

1.3 Illustrating the occurrence of rhetorical modes in different genres

Our use of language, as Bakhtin (1986) reminds us, always takes place through a given genre, and different genres are characterized by different rhetorical features (Longacre, 1983). In terms of rhetorical modes, two outstanding patterns of occurrence may be observed. On the one hand, more than one mode will, most typically, be found in a genre. Thus, a simple personal letter, for instance, may contain different rhetorical modes, such as *narration*, to present a chronological series of relevant events the letter writer has been involved in, for example; *description*, to give a picture of some new specific aspect of reality; process or *procedure*, to specify steps for the addressee to do the letter writer a favor; *argument*, to defend a point of view regarding a certain way of understanding a given "reality"; *definition*, to characterize a newly discovered product; *matching*, to compare/contrast aspects of his/her new environment, etc. Notice, to emphasize the notions of unity and diversity, that these few but productive rhetorical modes, which imply language unity, do occur in a variety of other genres as well, which imply diversity.

On the other hand, a given rhetorical mode may occur in a great number of different genres. Narration is probably the most productive (Virtanen, 1992) of the rhetorical modes. Besides being found in genres as diverse as agony aunt columns, different types of letters, newspaper reports, obituaries, research papers, short stories, meeting minutes, etc, narration may be used to concatenate events, and may act as a community building device (Meurer, 1998, 40-41) as well as an argumentative strategy. In Figure 1, I present examples of eight different rhetorical modes (narration, description, definition, and so on) extracted from different genres (short story, prospectus, novel, news report, etc.):

Narration: "The man went up to the bedroom where his wife was still asleep and woke her". (From the short story *The unicorn in the garden*, by James Thurber)

Description: "The University of Birmingham is a major international centre for postgraduate research and teaching. It has all the benefits of a large, established university: there is a wide range of research opportunities and courses, the standard of teaching is very high and the facilities both for academic work and for social life are varied and of a good quality". (From a prospectus)

Definition: "*Het Achterhuis*, the Dutch title of this book, refers to that part of the building which served as a hiding place for the two families who took shelter there between 1942 and 1944. *Achter* means 'behind' or 'in back of' and *huis* is Dutch for 'house'". (From the novel *Anne Frank: The diary of a young girl*, by Anne Frank)

Matching: "London has the most hospital beds at 72,000 but Barcelona has the doctors... Paris has more theatres, but London wins on museums and golf courses" (From a news report: *Good times in Paris, Europe* – *The Guardian*, November 15, 1993)

Division/Classification: "Minuchin and his group have studied the families of anorexia nervosa patients and have described several characteristics which are usually present. First, these families display an unusual degree of overprotectiveness... Second, they are remarkably unable to resolve conflict. Third, family members are abnormally involved or enmeshed in each other's personal lives. Finally, these family patterns are rigidly repeated regardless of ..." (From Freedman, S. B. and Hoeckelman, R.A. 1980. *Behavioral pediatrics: Psychosocial aspects of child health care*. McGraw-Hill: New York.)

Exemplification: "I am writing to complain about the lack of facilities in my town. The cinema has just closed down and I have to go 10 miles to the nearest one". (From a letter to the editor by Chris Beal (15), in Abbott, J. (1981) *Meet the press*, p. 45. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)

Causal analysis: "Some people have a strong and unpleasant body odour no matter how often they wash. Doctors now believe they may have a genetic condition that prevents them getting rid of certain foodstuffs." (From the popular science report "Is it true that some people can't help smelling bad", in *Focus*, p. 13, London, Dec., 1993)

Process: "Now you can see how to avoid or greatly reduce tooth decay. 1. Try to avoid sugar and sweets... 2. Brush your teeth night and morning, every day..." (From a health brochure: *What can you do to fight tooth decay?*)

Figure 2 – Examples of rhetorical modes in different genres

Whether we find several rhetorical modes occurring in a genre, or one only rhetorical mode being realized in several genres, rhetorical modes constitute a reduced number of "groupings of text which are similar in terms of co-occurrence of linguistic patterns" (Paltridge, forthcoming, p. 5) and function, which constitute "abstract organizing principles" or "idealized patterns" (Winkler & McCuen, 1995) for implementing genres. It is in this sense that rhetorical modes may be seen as unity in language use while genres stand for variety. This point will be further discussed in the next section, where I will illustrate how genre analysis, as developed either within systemic functional linguistics (SFL) or other traditions, may use rhetorical modes as an analytical tool. Due to space limitations, I will restrict the discussion to selected aspects of clause relations as developed mainly by Winter (1977, 1982, 1986), even though other authors (e.g., Mann, Matthiessen, and Thompson, 1992) have also developed relevant approaches to similar relations in text.

2. Illustrating unity versus diversity: Clause relations as a rhetorical mode in a fable as a genre

In the previous section, I mentioned the fact that narration, a highly productive rhetorical mode, occurs in a large number of different genres and that the spread of a given rhetorical mode into many genres may foreground the notion of unity versus diversity in language use. In order to elaborate further on this point I will analyze a fable in terms of clause relations as rhetorical modes. Three aspects of clause relations will be explored, namely: (a) Situation-Evaluation (a Basic Text Structure); (b) Matching Compatibility; and (c) Matching Incompatibility (two Basic Clause Relations). As these structures and relations do also occur in a large number of different genres, they reinforce unity versus diversity in language use. But before getting into the analysis I will briefly present the notion of clause relations.

Clause relations are rhetorical mechanisms of text organisation and as such they also constitute specific rhetorical modes occurring in different genres. The notion of clause relation applies both to text interpretation and text production. In text interpretation, a clause relation “is the shared cognitive process whereby we interpret the meaning of a clause or group of clauses in the light of their adjoining clause or group of clauses” (Winter, 1986, p. 91). In text production, it is “the cognitive process whereby the choices we make from grammar and lexis [...] in the creation of a sentence or group of sentences are made in the light of its adjoining sentence or group of sentences” (Hoey, 1983, p. 19).

Clause relations may combine in many ways, as it is the case with other rhetorical modes. Nevertheless, they are limited in number and there is also a limited number of conventionally *preferred* patterns of combinations as shown, for instance, in Hoey (1983), Tadros (1985), Winter (1986), and Vasconcellos (1997). As specified by Winter (1986), clause relations may subdivide into two main types: Basic Clause Relations, which are “our stock of relations between any two clauses or sentences the moment they are put together”, and Basic Text Structures, which “are the *basic message structures* which act as particular linguistic

contexts or vehicles for Basic Clause Relations" (Winter 1986, p. 91). Basic Text Structures include conventional ways in which texts are organized, such as Situation-Evaluation, Hypothetical-Real, Preview-Detail or Preview-Example, and General-Specific. Basic Clause Relations include microlevel relations such as logical sequence and matching. In order to demonstrate how both Basic Text Structures and Basic Clause Relations may be analyzed in terms of their semantic impact in texts, I will make use of the Situation-Evaluation structure and of matching relations.

The Situation-Evaluation pattern of text organization may be captured by the questions *what is the text about?* and *what do you think about it?* The first question refers to the Situation element of the text and the second to the Evaluation element (Winter, 1982, pp. 9-10). As every text necessarily represents a given Situation, i.e., it is about something, and speakers/writers frequently express their opinion or attitude about portrayed Situations, the Situation-Evaluation sequence is seen as forming a minimal Basic Text Structure. Therefore, it constitutes a macrostructural rhetorical mode. The Situation is the 'know' information and the Evaluation is the 'think' information, as explained in Winter (ibid). An Evaluation element which cannot be appropriately related to a Situation will constitute an incomplete and incoherent piece of text.

We have a Matching Relation when we compare or contrast "one thing, action, event, person, process, attribute, etc., with another thing, action, event, person, process, attribute, etc., in respect of their similarities and differences" (Winter 1986:92). When things, actions, events, persons, processes or attributes are matched for similarities, we refer to Matching Compatibility, which in semantic terms may be captured by: "What is true of X is true of Y in respect of A feature" (Winter, 1986, p. 93). On the other hand, if things, actions, events, persons, processes or attributes are matched regarding differences, we refer to Matching Incompatibility, the semantics of which may be expressed as "What is true of X is NOT true of Y in respect of A feature" (ibid., p. 93). An outstanding feature of matching relations is repetition which allows writers to create semantic environments for the substitution of new

information by *replacement*, i.e., by adding new information to a repeated structure (Winter, 1977). This feature of matching relations will be noticed in the example to be explored in the next section. Typically, matching constitutes a microlevel rhetorical mode.

We are now ready to examine a complete text in terms of the strategic use by its writer of the Situation-Evaluation pattern of text organization (a macrostructural rhetorical mode) and matching relations of Compatibility and Incompatibility (a microstructural mode). Notice that the latter are instantiated within the former. I will show that it is by choosing to exploit the two rhetorical modes simultaneously that the writer is able to produce explicit and implicit meanings typical of the genre. Here is the text:

- (1) Aesop, the Greek writer of fables, was sitting by the road one day when a traveller stopped and asked him, "Tell me, my friend, what sort of people live in Athens?"
- (2) Aesop replied, "Tell me where you come from and what sort of people live there, and I'll tell you what sort of people you'll find in Athens."
- (3) Smiling, the man answered, "I come from Argos, and there the people are all friendly, generous and warm-hearted. I love them."
- (4) At this Aesop answered, "I'm happy to tell you, my dear friend, that you'll find the people of Athens much the same."
- (5) A few hours later, another traveller came down the road, and he too stopped and asked Aesop, "Tell me, what are the people of Athens like? "
- (6) Again, Aesop replied, "Tell me where you come from and what the people are like there, and I'll tell you what the people are like in Athens."
- (7) Frowning the man said, "I come from Argos and there the people are unfriendly, mean, deceitful and vicious. They're thieves and murderers. All of them."

(8) "I'm afraid you'll find the people of Athens much the same," was Aesop's reply.

[Unknown source].

I will examine how the author has chosen to interweave the Situation-Evaluation text structure with Matching Compatibility and Matching Incompatibility. If we read the fable again, we may notice that it contains two main Situations: the stretches numbered (1) and (2) form the first Situation, where Aesop interacts with the first traveller, and the stretches numbered (5) and (6) form the second one, where Aesop interacts with the second traveller. The ideational content of each one of these Situations demands an explicit Evaluation since we may rephrase Aesop's reply to each one of the travellers as implying "evaluate the people who live in your town and I will evaluate the people in Athens". As expected, the stretches numbered (3) and (4) play an evaluative role within Situation one (i.e., people from Argos are "all friendly, generous and warm-hearted" and people from Athens are "much the same"). Similarly, the stretches numbered (7) and (8) play an evaluative role within Situation two (people from Argos "are unfriendly, mean, deceitful and vicious", and people from Athens "are much the same" as well).

In terms of matching relations, we may notice the author's choice of Matching Compatibility in relation to Aesop's Evaluations within the first Situation (people from Argos and from Athens are much the same), and the second as well (people from Argos and Athens are also much the same). If we compare Situation one to Situation two, we may also notice that they match together. (The interweaving between Situation-Evaluation and Matching Compatibility is represented in Figure 3.³) Due to the matching mode, there is a high degree of textual repetition to create the linguistic environment for the replacement of "one day" by "a few hours later", and of "traveller" by "a new traveller", which signal the onset of the second Situation.

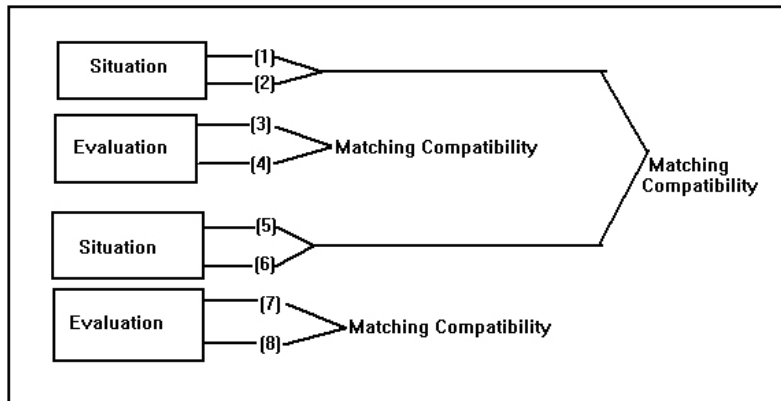


Figure 3 - Matching Compatibility in Aesop's text

As I observed in the previous paragraph and as represented in Figure 3, Matching Compatibility is textualized in the travellers' and Aesop's Evaluations taking place *within* each one of the two Situations. On the other hand, when we contrast the first set of Evaluations in the first Situation to the second set of Evaluations in the second Situation, we observe that the Matching the writer now offers us is one of Incompatibility: what is true of Argos and Athens in Situation 1 is NOT true of Argos and Athens in Situation 2 in respect of their people. (This new matching is represented in Figure 4).

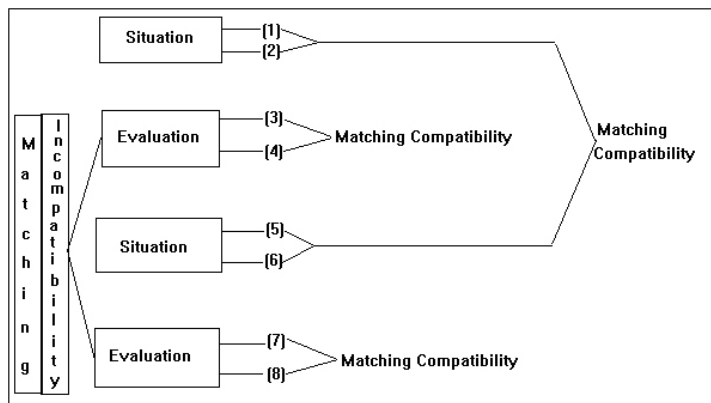


Figure 4 - Matching Compatibility and Incompatibility in Aesop's text

The main point of this analysis is to show that, by purposefully manipulating the rhetorical modes Situation-Evaluation and matching, the writer has been able to create explicit and implicit meanings to construct an apparent contradiction. As it is impossible that all the people in Argos and Athens are both “friendly, generous and warm-hearted” and “unfriendly, mean, and vicious”, the reader is led to look for implicatures (Grice, 1975) typical of the genre. Instantiating the maxim of quality (tell the truth) within Grice’s Cooperative Principle, the reader can solve the apparent discrepancy: it is not the case that the text is incoherent but that the author says *p* but implies *q*, that is, the commonsensical view that the truth is in the eyes of the beholder, or that people see the world in their own way.⁴

3. Final remarks

We use language in the form of specific genres (Bakhtin, 1986), such as the fable I have analyzed in the previous section. Genres, as earlier represented in Figure 1, may contain one or more rhetorical modes, which constitute the abstract linguistic structures and semantic relations strategically used as ingredients in genre construction. Thus, matching relations, for instance, which are one specific rhetorical mode, may be found in genres as diverse as fables, advertising, court examination and cross examination, scientific papers, jokes, gossip, sermons, etc.

In this paper, I have argued that it is important to define clearly the notions of genre and rhetorical mode, and I have suggested that genre analysis – as seen within SFL and other genre traditions as well – might benefit from integrating the notion of rhetorical modes in their theoretical and methodological proposals. What may we gain from such an integration? For one thing, we might better understand the import of the two notions. Rhetorical modes serve as building blocks in the construction of genres. It is by means of a variety of genres that different social practices are carried out, and it is through genres that identities, relations, and forms of knowledge and beliefs are instantiated

(Fairclough, 1992; Meurer, 2002). However, it is rhetorical modes that instantiate the variety of genres we need to use. For another thing, we might better see that, while genres stand for variety, and are associated to as many different possibilities of language use as the related social practices, rhetorical modes may stand for unity because they constitute a limited number of linguistic patterns which allow for the production of an infinite number of genres.

Though markedly different, the impact of genres and rhetorical modes is not well understood as yet. Research is necessary into their linguistic and functional status so that we can more clearly make sense of their role within different discursive and social practices.

Notes

- 1 Field refers to the ongoing activity, tenor to the role relationships between the participants, and mode to the channel the message is conveyed through.
- 2 The notion of clusters is also developed in Bakhtin (1986) and Swales (1990).
- 3 Figures 3 and 4 have been transposed from Meurer (1996).
- 4 I am not interested in addressing the philosophical question that lies behind this belief

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