Shiraz University

Faculty of Literature and Humanities

M.A. Thesis in Teaching English as a Foreign Language-TEFL

Disciplinary Acculturation: A Comparative Study of English and Persian Introductory Textbooks of Sociology and Linguistics

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September 2013

دانشکده ادبیات وعلوم انسانی

پایان نامه کارشناسی ارشددررشته زبان انگلیسی-آموزش

فرهنگ پذیری رشته ای: مقایسه کتب درسی مقدماتی رشته های جامعه شنا سی و زبان شنا سی در زبان انگلیسی و فارسی

به کوشش

ساراشهاب

استادراهنما

دکترناصررشیدی

شهریورماه ۹۲

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DISCIPLINARY ACCULTURATION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ENGLISH AND PERSIAN INTRODUCTORY TEXTBOOKS OF SOCIOLOGY AND LINGUISTICS

BY

SARA SHAHAB

THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS (M.A.)

IN

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING
SHIRAZ UNIVERSITY
SHIRAZ
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

EVALUATED AND APPROVED BY THE THESIS COMMITTEE AS: EXCELLENT

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SEPTEMBER 2013

Acknowledgments

This thesis would not have come to a successful completion, without the support of many people, to only some of whom it is possible to give particular mention here. First and foremost, I would like to express my extreme gratitude to Dr. Rashidi, for being an outstanding supervisor and excellent professor, whose constant encouragement, support, and invaluable suggestions made this work successful. His enthusiasm and tremendous expertise for my topic is extremely appreciated. He has been everything that one could want in a supervisor. I am also deeply indebted to my advisor, Dr. Saadat, for her time and effort in reviewing this work and providing valuable feedback and guidance throughout my research. I am really grateful for her invaluable advice, comments and support. My sincere thanks goes to Dr. Shahini for his invaluable collaboration with me.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my parents and my only brother for the support they provided me through my entire life and particularly, I must acknowledge my father, without whose unequivocal support, love, and encouragement, I would not have finished this thesis. I would also like to thank my mother for her affections and devotion. I am also most grateful to my husband, without whose love, encouragement, personal support, and editing assistance, I would not have completed this thesis.

Abstract

Disciplinary acculturation: A comparative study of English and Persian introductory textbooks of sociology and Linguistics

By

Sara Shahab

The present study aimed at investigating the specific discourse cycles and schematic (lexico-grammatical) structures, particularly the choice of grammatical subject, grammatical metaphor (nominalization), and thematization of some introductory textbooks across disciplines and Languages to see to what extent they acculturate students into the new subjects. To this end, two well-established English and Persian introductory textbooks in the discipline of sociology, and two other well-established English and Persian introductory textbooks in the discipline of *Linguistics* were examined. The study was conducted with reference to Love (1991, 1993) and Love's (as cited in Hewings, 2006) suggested framework for the analysis of introductory textbooks. More specifically, the study used MacDonald's (1994) classification of the head-word of grammatical subjects, and the theoretical framework of Hallidaean's Systemic Functional *Linguistics* (SFL) to investigate the choice of nominalization, as well as thematization. The researcher, first, analyzed the corpus in terms of lexico-grammatical features. Then, overall chapter structures, and intra-discourse cycles within chapters were examined. Finally, the introductory textbooks from the two disciplines were compared and contrasted in order to determine their similarities and differences in establishing a model of the epistemology of discipline for approaching the text, and hence acculturating students into the discipline. The results indicated that epistemic subjects were more frequent in English introductory textbooks, while phenomenal subjects were more frequently employed in Persian ones. Nominalization was frequently employed in all introductory textbooks analyzed. In addition, whereas marked sentences were abundant in English introductory textbooks, unmarked ones were more frequently employed in Persian introductory textbooks. Furthermore, the results showed that though in English introductory textbooks, the chapters either started with theory, data, or culminated in cutting-edge real time, problematization, in Persian ones, the chapters less frequently culminated in problematization of the interpretive process. The results, moreover, revealed that lexico-grammatical features reflected and reinforced the choice of intra-discourse cycles, which in turn, underpinned the structure of the chapters. In other words, there

appeared to be a reciprocal relation between the structure of the chapters, intra-discourse-cycles, and lexico-grammatical features, which together, constructed the epistemology of the disciplines. Regarding pedagogical implications, the study suggested that this kind of analysis enhances both teachers' and students' knowledge concerning the process of acculturation into the epistemological issues of a discipline.

Key words: Lexico-grammatical features, acculturation, epistemology, discipline, introductory textbooks, intra-discourse-cycles, chapter structures.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.0 Introduction

This chapter, first, provides a theoretical background regarding the topic of the study. Then, definitions of the key terms used in the study are provided. Next, the chapter reviews different traditions of genre theories: systemic functional Linguistics (SFL), new rhetoric, and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) perspectives on genre. Then, a brief overview of genre studies is offered which mainly covers disciplinary and interdisciplinary studies. After that, a brief account of academic acculturation and lexico-grammatical studies is provided. Finally, the objective, research questions and significance of the study are mentioned.

1.1 Preliminaries

Recently, researchers have shown an increased interest in academic written genre analysis so that it has become a major concern of language teaching research. According to Swales (1990) genre analysis can be defined as the study of how language is used within a particular setting. Genre analysis makes several noteworthy contributions to our existing literature. First, it is concerned with examining the structural organization of texts by taking in terms of moves and strategies and the way these moves are organized to achieve the communicative purpose of the text. Secondly, genre analysis investigates the specific lexico-grammatical features of the genres to see how they realize the communicative purpose of a text. Textualization, the roles of the writer and the audience, as well as the context are other considerations in genre analysis.

1.2 Definitions of key terms and concepts

1.2.1 Genre

Hyland (2002) stated that,

> Genres are abstract, socially recognized ways of using language. It is based on the idea that members of a community usually have little difficulty in recognising similarities in the texts they use frequently and are able to draw on their repeated experiences with such texts to read, understand, and perhaps write them relatively easily. This is, in part, because writing is a practice based on expectations: the reader's chances of interpreting the writer's purpose are increased if the writer takes the trouble to anticipate what the reader might be expecting based on previous texts they have read of the same kind (p.149).

Kress (1989) holds that genres are made as a result of the actions of individual social agents acting not only within the bounds of social history, but also within social contexts and with a knowledge of the way the texts were produced.

Hyland (2002) believes that the notion of genre and its application in language teaching and learning has received more attention in the last decade. Swales (1990) defines genres as classes of texts (communicative events) and their representations in an abstract, socially recognized model of language use. Genres are defined by social or communicative purposes which are readily recognized by the discourse communities which define these purposes as social standards of communication. Richards, Platt and Platt (1992) suggested that genre is a particular class of communicative events the speech community consider to be of the same type.

The way texts relating to different genres accomplish their communicative purposes are conventionalized within the discourse communities. Therefore, specific features of texts can be associated with the specific social contexts which create them. Given that these features are text-specific, we can identify similar texts related to each other. Consequently, what follows is that genres are social practices in contexts including the individual social agents acting within the constraints of those contexts.

Besides, the research literature abounds with studies concerning academic written genre analysis (e.g., Bhatia, 1993; Dudley-Evans, 1998; Hyland, 2000; Swales, 1990, 2004). In recent years, studies of genre analysis have been either disciplinary or inter-disciplinary oriented. According to Hyland (2006), genre-based research has been 'slow to inform research into disciplinary variation'. Only a limited number of recent studies in academic writing have revealed disciplinary and cross-cultural variations in genres, involving Language Teaching and Applied *Linguistics* (Basturkmen, 2011, Hyland, 2000, 2001, 2002; Lim, 2010; Oztürk, 2007; Samraj, 2000, 2002; Thompson, 2001; Yang & Allison, 2003), Art History (Tucker, 2003), Education (Lim, 2010), Geology (Dressen, 2003), Management (Lim, 2006), Medicine (Li & Ge, 2009; Nwogu, 1997), Biomedicine (Dubois, 1997) and Social Sciences (Brett, 1994; Holmes, 1997; Lewin, Fine, & Young, 2001), Dentistry (Basturkmen, 2012).

Furthermore, so far, the major focus of research in academic genre analysis has been the investigation of the discussion section of research papers, Ph.D. dissertations, and master's thesis within disciplines (Basturkmen, 2012; Bunton, 1999; Hyland, 1996a, 1996b, 2002d, 2007; Samraj, 2004, 2008). Nonetheless, genre studies of textbooks have been limited to introductory texts in undergraduate fields such as physics (Kuhn, 1970), genetics (Myers, 1992), geology (Love 1991, 1993) and economics (Hender-son & Hewings, 1990; McCloskey, 1985; Tadros, 1985). It appears that very few disciplinary studies have been conducted to analyze the genre of introductory textbooks (Love 1991; Myers 1992; Hyland 1999; Love 2002; Woodward-Kron 2002a).

Moreover, a large and growing body of literature has investigated interdisciplinary variation in research articles, master's theses and dissertations: psychology, history, and literature (MacDonald, 1992), history, political science and sociology (Holmes, 1997), biology, philosophy and *Linguistics* (Samraj, 2008). Nevertheless, as for the interdisciplinary studies on introductory textbooks, few studies have been conducted. Hyland (1999) analyzed introductory textbooks across three disciplines of microbiology, marketing and applied *Linguistics* and compared them with a similar corpus of research articles. The study focused primarily on the analysis of metadiscourse markers, with little attention paid to the schematic and discourse structures.

1.2.2 Genre theories

According to Hyland (2002), though broadly speaking, researchers identify genres by taking both the context and the readers into account, one can identify three schools of genre theory: The new

rhetoric approach, Systemic functional *Linguistics* (SFL), and English for specific purposes (ESP approach).

1.2.2.1 New Rhetoric

Rhetoric refers to the study of effective speaking and writing as well as the art of persuasion and effective communication. In fact, it investigates how language is used to organize and maintain social groups, construct meanings and identities, coordinate behavior, mediate power, produce change, and create knowledge.

Taking a prescriptive approach, the old rhetorics treated genre as a historical phenomenon rather than as a living force, despite its continuing cultural role in politics, literature, and education. Therefore, in this era there was anxiety considering the fact that rhetoric had not progressed significantly beyond what the ancients had expressed.

So, taking a descriptive approach, the new rhetorics defined genre influenced by the works of rhetorical scholars such as Campbell and Jamieson (1978), and particularly Miller (1984). Miller (1984) states that certain social and historical aspects of rhetoric can be clarified by the analysis of actual genres and thereby reinforces the work of Jamieson. In this tradition, most of the rhetorical scholars treat genre as an unstable entity which cannot be classified. They all aim to illuminate rather than classify genres. Miller (1984) suggests that the number of genres in any society is indeterminate and depends upon the complexity of that society.

1.2.2.2 Systemic functional Linguistics (SFL)

First, in Linguistics, genres have been discussed from the systemic or Hallidaean point of view. In systemic functional Linguistics, Language is considered to be meaning potential, so that language users not only make choices, but also turn out functional texts in terms of different contexts. Coffins (2001) mentioned that systemic functional Linguistics takes social and cultural roles of Language into account. As stated by Martin (2001), systemic functional *Linguistics* specifically focuses on the sets of choices that Language provides for the speakers to convey meanings.

Linguists consider genres as goal-oriented communicative social events. Martin and Rothery (1986) define genres as staged purposeful processes through which a culture is realized in a language. What's more, linguists define genres as having schematic structures. Rothery (1996)

states that genres can be studied in terms of distinctive stages or moves together with the patterns of lexical, grammatical, and cohesive devices which construct the function of these stages of genres.

Additionally, linguists define genres as distinct from registers or styles. Of course, only recently genres have been recognized as distinct from registers. Gregory and Carroll (1978) define registers as functional language variations or contextual language categories correlating groups of linguistic features with recurrent situational features.

Registers have been typically analyzed in terms of three variables: field, tenor, and mode, which relate to the type of activity in which discourse operates its ideas, the status and role of participants and channel of communication, respectively. Martin (1985) makes a three-way distinction between genre, register and language. He believes that genres are realized through registers, and registers in turn are realized through language.

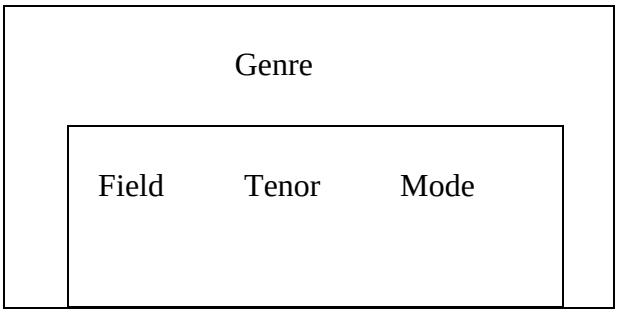

Figure 1. Relationship of genre and register (Eggins & Martin, 1997, p. 243)

1.2.2.3 English for specific purposes (ESP)

Finally, the ESP definition of genre draws upon insights from both new rhetoric and systemic functional Linguistics approaches; thus, emphasizing both formal properties of texts and the communicative purposes of them. Swales (1990) indicates that a genre is a class of communicative events sharing a set of communicative purposes which create a rationale of a genre. This rationale establishes constraints on contributions that are allowed in terms of content, positioning and form. He also believes that exemplars or instances of a genre are similar in terms of structure, style, content and intended audience, and if these expectations are realized, the exemplars will be recognized by the members of discourse communities. Taken together, it seems that among all