

WEB GENRES OF CHILDREN'S RIGHT DISCOURSE IN THE DIGITAL MEDIA

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Abstract

Genres analysis of children rights discourse deals with various theoretical and empirical issues. Theory of genres considers genres as various social practices. Sociolinguistics studies of genre take into account not only genres and text analysis but contexts in which they function. Nowadays a great deal of public and institutional practices moved to virtual space, changing forms of communication due to the new media context. The development of digital media urges the studies of new forms of web genres in the social sphere of children's rights. The notion of web genres has been approached from different perspectives of cognitive and informational load and bear importance for empirical studies. While huge amount of information is processed in digital media, genres are considered as stable forms and analytical units intended to deal with challenges new media entail.

The analysis of language and structure of children's right organization's web genres has been considered with the view of their functional potential in the digital media context.

Keywords: Discourse genre analysis, Sociolinguistic context of genre, Digital context, Web genres structure and content analysis; Communicative purpose of genre; Web genre interactive functions;

1. INTRODUCTION

Discourse and genre approach to the Children rights show its relevance to both theoretical and applied researches. The impact of language on the processes concerning the social, legislative and communicative aspects of children's right development has been significant. The capacity to use language, to form opinions, to participate in decision making has been an important contribution to the development of global discourse on children's rights (Holzscheiter, 2010, Buzzi, 2017). The use of new media brought sizable changes in various discursive practices. New technologies have been affecting greatly the context of communication and practices. The issues of digital discursive practices and their relations to social and legal spheres require consideration of web genres, their forms and functions.

The genres of children's right discourse performs legislative, informative, monitoring and other functions as they relate to various sphere of law and national and international institutions. Web genres are considered with respect to their structures, institutional websites content and communicating information.

2. THEORETICAL PREMISES OF GENRE STUDIES

The studies of language in the social context have been one of the main intentions of discourse analysis. An important point in understanding discourse as social phenomenon is that the discourse could not be perceived out of the context (Wodak, Meyer, 2009). Discourse analysis is an interdisciplinary approach to study discourse, which is considered as social, linguistically mediated practices. The studies of discursive practices involve not only text analysis, but descriptions of genres and contexts in which discourses are functioning.

In spite of the fact that the studies of genre have been evolved through centuries - from their classical origins in Plato's and Aristotle's works and to the current studies, there is no common definition and universal characteristics of genre. Approaches to genre studies vary with their main differentiation between literary and non- literary genres. Literary genre studies comprise Neoclassical, Structuralist, Romantic and Post-Romantic, Reader response approaches and Cultural studies approaches to genre. The studies of genre in linguistic tradition include Functional Linguistic, Historical and Corpus Linguistic, Discourse and ESP approaches (Bawarshi, Reiff, 2010). Rhetorical Genre studies are of particular significance as they represent an important part of multiple research fields, including social, academic and professional spheres (Miller, Devitt, 2018).

J. Bateman (2008) summarizes views on genre elaborated by the influential genre schools such as Genre as social action and Genre as social semiotics which are based on systemic functional linguistics and require detailed genre classification to reveal all genres functioning within a particular discourse community. Speaking about web genres, Bateman claims that considering the notion of web genre in terms of its traditional characteristics of 'content' and 'form' or modified definition using the notions of 'content', 'form' and 'functionality' could be not reliable. Many researchers adhere to the traditional Swales' view of genre in terms of purpose, moves, and rhetorical strategies.

Genres analysis of legal discourse has been in the focus in the studies by Bhatia (1993, 1996), Rasmussen, Engberg (1999) and other researchers. They rely in their studies on the definition of genre elaborated by Swales (1990), and Bhatia (1993). Bhatia considers one of legal discourse genres, a court judgement, as having a linear move structure, which includes sequence of actions starting from identifying the case and to the pronouncing of the judgment and he describes the legislative provision as interactive, in which the main provisional clause and its qualifications, inserted into the sentence structure, interact.

The model of genre analysis of law discourse developed by K Rasmussen and J. Engberg (1999) take into consideration the following levels of genre analysis: communicative purpose of genres, its move structure and rhetorical strategies used. Communicative purpose of genre is considered the most important criteria, which determines the move-structure of the genre. Move structure includes actions, used by discourse community members to reach the genre communicative purposes. The two types of move structure have been identified by them as linear and interactive.

Genre analysis makes it possible for researchers to comprehend and to account for complicated social processes and is considered as means of studying spoken and written discourse for applied purposes. Genre centered approach is relevant to studying of various communicative events (Swales, 1990).

Since numerous institutions and organizations on human rights made their appearance on the international arena their activities came out in the form of multiple genres intended for achieving the practical goals. Human right discourse constitutes an important part not only in law, but is inalienable from other discursive practices people are involved in.

Genre research has encompassed lately web based information systems and extended functional genre analysis model to specify the notion of web genre as non-linear, multi-modal and web-mediated documents. The studies of genre have included both the genre functioning in the new digital medium (Ryan et al. 2003) and genre as medium itself (Askehave, Nielsen, 2005).

The new genre models make use of such features as reading or navigational mode, the use of hyperlinking facilities, various levels – social, cognitive and others.

3. WEB GENRE OF CHILDREN RIGHT DISCOURSE DEVELOPMENT AND ITS FUNCTIONS

The children rights legislation development and the national programmes implementation have been put at the top of the governments' agenda across the world. Work in this sphere involves various organizations and people. Being a global issue much of the information and activities in this sphere are presented in the digital

media.

The notion of genre as a social action is relevant to the studies of discourse of children's rights. The studies of genre are intended to reveal social, cultural and linguistic contexts in which the discourse genres function. Genre studies are necessary for practical application in various spheres where language is an important tool for achieving practical goals.

The growth of digitally mediated data impacts the way of production and communicating social discourses. Internet sites and platforms provide access to various information and facilitate communication, though the huge amount of information complicates its processing. The work with web sites generated the need to work out the concept of web genres. Web genres could be classified using the features for classification of text genres, though the World Wide Web brought about new criteria and challenges. Some researchers are working on software engineering and developing browser add-ons to introduce genre web search. There is a heightened interest into automatic genre analysis of Web documents as key words are often not enough to search the required information or document (Mehler et al., 2010, Braslavsky, 2010). Speaking about web space the researchers deal with such categories as web sites, web pages, home pages, blogs and other web resources or documents. These resources are used by organizations and individuals with various purposes. Though there is no comprehensive classification of web genres as the new digital context brought about a lot of changes, some web genres are discernable. Web genres studies require not only language and text analysis but more specific features have to be taken into account.

The Internet platforms such as web pages and home pages reveal some similarities in their structure and language and are considered as web genres. The home pages of the children's rights organizations such as the UN international organization of UNICEF, the UK Children's Rights Alliance for England (CRAE) and the USA non-profit Children organization Hopeland have been chosen for the analysis.

The homepage of UNICEF provides information in five languages: English, French, Spanish, Arabic and Chinese under the following sections: What we do - Research and Reports – Stories – Take Action and there is a Search Engine button to look for more specific information. The Sections provide more related information in the forms various traditional non-literary genres via links such as reports and articles, new digital genres such as blogs and blog posts, which is a story told in the 3rd person including partially direct speech of a person whose story is provided. There are photo essays which could be considered as a mixture of art and linguistic genres.

The home page provides various links, indicating their purposes, using the verbs in the Imperative mood for a request or a command, such as: Explore UNICEF, Donate, Take Action, Connect with UNICEF, Visit the page, Search and others. There are also links to online social media and social networking services such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube.

The structure of the UK CRAE home page is similar in structure to other homepages and provide information in English under the following sections: About Us, Our Work, Children's Rights & the Law, Publications and Resources, Get Involved, News, Membership, Contact with Links such as Make a donation, Become a member, and others.

The structure of the homepage of the USA non- profit organization Hopeland contains such sections as The Issue, Campaign, News, About, Contact and Donate with their links to relevant information, links to social networking services, e-mail and links to carry out some activity such as Donate, Subscribe, Share, etc.

The web genre of children rights organizations homepages could be described as similar in structure. But the role of language in structuring the homepage is specific and more pronounced than in literary and non-literary genres. The structure of the homepage could be understood only through description of its sections.

The specific characteristic of web genre in general and of homepage genre in particular is the use of links and the fact that new medium and web genre co-exist, with medium being considered an important feature of the web genre (Askehave, Nielsen, 2005).

The use of links in the homepages of Children rights organizations acquires interactive and social form. Unlike navigating mode of links in other homepages, which provide access to the entire website (Askehave, Nielsen, 2005), the links in Children Rights organizations homepages are intended to involve website users/readers from various areas or countries into social and charitable activities, thus making organization's work more effective, be impactful and advanced. So the visitors of the Children Rights' organizations website can contribute to organizations' work, share their experience, support and emotions, provide donation for children's benefit, interact with other people and organizations from all over the world.

4. CONCLUSION

Current genre studies tend to focus on non-literary texts, considering genres as types of discourses, possessing similarities in form and content and relating these similarities to various spheres of people activities, to social and cultural understanding of language in use (Freedman, Medway, 2005).

The development of children's rights discourse demonstrates growing importance and far-reaching changes in national and global arena. The new digital media provide all kind of information, but search for required document could be a tedious and time consuming task, here the web genre features could be helpful in finding the right information/documents. The understanding and use of web genre contribute to cognitive processing of information, providing culture, language and practical background, contribute to effective use of language in the new media.

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CRAE URL: <http://www.crae.org.uk/>

Hopeland URL: <https://ourhopeland.org/>

UNICEF URL : <https://www.unicef.org/>