



New Applications of Genre Analysis to Technical Manuals. The Perspectives of Bhatia and Lassen Models

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Genre analysis and genre-based pedagogy have attracted growing attention from different scholarly traditions over the last decades, particularly from those researchers who have focused on professional and workplace communication. With this volume, which explores the *Silestone* technical manual genre, Felices Lago and Fernández Lloret seek to respond to the demand for exploration of professional genres.

As an instructional genre addressing highly-skilled specialized personnel, the technical manual represents an action-oriented genre whose communicative purpose is the creation and dissemination of technological knowledge. *New Applications of Genre Analysis to Technical Manuals* follows the traditional definition of genres as typified rhetorical action and hence used to accomplish a specific action (Miller, 1984) – as the authors claim, the manual seeks “to get the job done” (page 32). When understanding the genre as “situated” into disciplinary practice (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995), the authors align themselves with the view of genres as socially constructed, in other words, as oriented towards meeting the needs of the community and thus towards achieving a social goal. Under these premises, the volume carries an analysis of the technical manual inspired by the work of genre theorists such as Swales or Bhatia and their view of professional genres as complex, multilayered and evolving, thus determined by the dynamism of professional practices and goals.

To set the theoretical background for the study, the volume starts with a historical overview of the discursive scenario of language and communication in professional and specialized settings and reviews the foundational concepts of genre theory (Part 1). Drawing on Swales’ seminal definition of genre and its later application to specialized discourse by Bhatia

(2004), Lassen (2003) and Killingsworth and Gilbertson (1992), the authors explore the technical manual as a hybrid genre subject to changing communicative needs and whose generic features are linked to the action it needs to accomplish: to ensure the adequate use of the device. On these grounds, the authors define their hypothesis, objectives and research questions in Part 2: (i) the application of Bhatia's and Lassen's approaches to the analysis of the moves and steps of technical manuals; (ii) the comparison of similarities and variations in structure and style across areas of specialization; and, finally, (iii) some proposals on the possible adaptation of the model.

Part 3 deals with the genre analysis of the *Silestone* technical manual. After a review of the evolution of the moves and steps models proposed in the literature, the authors justify their adoption of Lassen's (2003) application of the model for technical communication. It is, in their view, a suitable framework for the specificities of the majority of the manuals, despite the possible stylistic variation, marketing strategies, interests or business cultures. The authors, however, question the flexibility of Bhatia's model and view the genre as shaped by its communicative purpose (the correct use of the product as well as the co-operation with customers) and therefore showing considerable variation in terms of organization and structure.

With Lassen's model as the "skeleton" (page 138), the study presents the results of a genre analysis of a corpus of 3 *Silestone* technical manuals compared with a second corpus of 17 manuals of engineering and electronic devices employed within the food, petrochemical or energy sector. As they argue, despite variations in the structure of the genre, related to the specificities of its communicative purposes, a number of the steps and moves considered obligatory by Lassen tend to appear in all the manuals analyzed. Their findings thus ratify the validity of the model although the authors finally argue for its flexibility. In its conclusions the volume suggests some modifications of the model, which would be based on a common structure but with specific moves, steps and sub-steps for each specialized discipline.

New Applications of Genre Analysis to Technical Manuals represents a solid contribution to the field of technical communication as well as to genre analysis studies which will benefit teachers in ESP or professional communication courses as well as professionals themselves. Felices Lago and Fernández Lloret provide an insightful, carefully-designed analysis of the

technical manual genre. For their theoretical framework the authors rely on well-established genre theorists such as Swales or Bhatia. However, a review of the more recent developments in the field would have offered an interesting perspective. Yet, the volume proposes a very flexible model for the genre analysis of the technical manuals, whose major contribution is its adaptability to the specific communicative purpose of each specialized discourse community.

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