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BOOK REVIEW



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Conducting Genre-Based Research in Applied Linguistics: A Methodological Guide, Matt Kessler and Charlene Polio. New York: Routledge (2024), 247 pp. ISBN: 978-1-032-29284-7.

Maryam Soleimani ^{a,*}

^aFarhangiyān University, Iran

Conducting Genre-Based Research in Applied Linguistics: A Methodological Guide edited by Matt Kessler and Charlene Polio is a comprehensive resource on conducting research in applied linguistics involving written genres and is distinctive in its coverage of a multiplicity of interdisciplinary perspectives. The book's major bonus is its focus on the central approaches, methodologies, analyses, and tools used in conducting genre-based research, extending the traditional focus on a single framework for defining genres by explicating the major approaches that have been invoked in applied linguistics. Chapters address a mix of commonly used methodologies (e.g., case studies, ethnographic approaches), types of analyses (e.g., metadiscourse, rhetorical move-step analysis, multidimensional analysis, lexical bundles and phrase frames, complexity, accuracy, lexis and fluency (CALF) measures, multimodal analysis), and studies that focus on other areas of second language (L2) teaching and learning such as multilingualism.

This volume is divided into three main sections following the Introduction. These sections include: Section I (Research Methods), Section II (Analyses, Tools, and Topics), and lastly, Section III (Focus on the Learner and Learning). Each of the ten content chapters (i.e., Chapters 2–11) addresses different research methods, tools, or topics pertaining to genre-based research, and follow a similar organization. In particular, each chapter follows a similar internal structure that consists of seven sections, which are titled: (1) Introduction to the approach and definition of genre, (2) Goals, (3) Common research methods, (4) Example studies, (5) Issues and challenges, (6) Study-in-focus, and (7) Future research directions.

The first Chapter, Introduction, begins with a brief historical overview of the emergence of the term genre within applied linguistics, followed by a discussion of the three major approaches to genre, including: English for Specific Purposes (ESP), which emerged from the works of Swales (2004), Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), which emerged from the work of Halliday (1978), and the New Rhetoric/Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS) approach, primarily introduced by Miller (1984).

* Corresponding author: Farhangiyān University, Iran

Email address: m.soleimani.1361@gmail.com

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In Section I, entitled Research Methods, there are two chapters, which cover established qualitative research methodologies that have been prominent in explorations of written genres. The two chapters in this section include Chapter 2 on the use of Case Studies (authored by Raffaella Negretti and Baraa Khuder), and Chapter 3 on Ethnographic Research (by Christine Tardy).

Case studies in Chapter 2 are meant to represent a research methodology with a rich tradition in social sciences and education. The authors also review six articles that have used case studies with different aims and within different genre pedagogy frameworks, and they also highlight their qualities and their limitations and focus on one exemplary case, notable for its original contribution and its methodological approach.

Chapter 3, Ethnography, as the study of social or cultural practice, offers a mode of inquiry that is particularly well suited to understanding genre, including the practices and values that lead to genres' development and the social environments that impact genre learning.

Although Section I covers research methodologies that are purely qualitative in nature, in Section II, titled Analyses, Tools, and Topics, there are six chapters that adopt a greater diversity of methods, including quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. Unlike Section I, which covers holistic methodologies used in genre-based scholarship, Section II shifts the focus to some of the most prominent topics and types of analyses that researchers have used when investigating written genres. The chapters in Section II include: Chapter 4 on investigations of Metadiscourse (Ken Hyland), Chapter 5 on the use of Rhetorical Move Step Analysis (J. Elliott Casal and Matt Kessler), Chapter 6 on studies that analyze Lexical Bundles and Phrase Frames (Viviana Cortes), Chapter 7 on Multidimensional Analysis (Larissa Goulart and Shelley Staples), Chapter 8 on the adoption of Complexity, Accuracy, and Fluency Measures (Charlene Polio and Hyung-Jo Yoon), and Chapter 9, which covers Multimodal Analysis (Larissa D'Angelo and Francesca Marino).

Metadiscourse, in Chapter 4, is the commentary on a text made by its producer in the course of speaking or writing, and is a widely used term in current genre analysis and language teaching. The first metadiscourse study is Hyland's (2004) early paper developing his model of metadiscourse. Chapter 5 encompasses Rhetorical move-step analysis which is a text analytical approach used to investigate the organizational and rhetorical structures of community genre practices. Moreover, Chapter 6 focuses on lexical bundles and phrase frames and their relationship to genre and communicative intents, as expressed in rhetorical moves and steps.

Multidimensional analysis (MDA) in Chapter 7 introduces how MDA can inform genre analyses and highlights some of the challenges in adopting this type of approach. In Chapter 8, the studies examining genre variation in complexity, accuracy, and fluency (CALF) measures and discussing their pedagogical and research implications are reviewed. Advancements in digital technology, Chapter 9, provide an overview of the three main approaches employed by applied linguists to examine genre from a multimodal perspective, including Systemic Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis, Social Semiotics Multimodal Analysis, and Multimodal Corpus Analysis.

The final section of this volume, Section III, addresses scholarship with a Focus on the Learner and Learning. As the title of this section suggests, there has been a large body of scholarship that has tended to focus on aspects of the learners themselves, particularly, by focusing on L2/multilingual learners as they engage with different written genres. The final two chapters of this volume address these areas, with Chapter 10 covering the topic of Multilingualism and Multicompetence (Bruna Sommer-Farias), and Chapter 11 covering the topic of Systemic Functional Linguistics and the (Expanded) Teaching and Learning Cycle (Kathryn Accurso and Jennifer Walsh Marr).

Chapter 10 provides an overview of theoretical orientations and research methods used by previous studies on genre and genre knowledge across languages, focusing primarily on multicompetence as a paradigm and multilingual users as focal writers. Finally, Chapter 11 focuses on conducting research involving written genres from the perspective of Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and Martin's genre theory. Genre analysis using systemic functional linguistics (SFL) is an empirical method of identifying and functionally labeling the structure of texts in different cultures and situations (Halliday & Hasan, 1985).

In conclusion, this edited volume will serve as a useful guide for graduate students, early career scholars and those interested in conducting genre-based research in the future. Importantly, this book is specifically meant to showcase the most prominent methods, analyses, and topics that have been investigated in the field of applied linguistics. The book is very well written and well-organized with an uncomplicated structure and excellent coverage of the key issues. This volume can serve as a useful starting point for readers who wish to gain a foundational understanding of key areas involved in genre-based scholarship.

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