

DISTINCTION BETWEEN LINGUISTIC TERMS OF STYLE, REGISTER, GENRE, TEXT TYPE AND MODE OF DISCOURSE

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In dealing with the text different terms are used to point out its variety of features, resulting in some ambiguity, especially in use of such concepts as style, register, genre, text type and mode of discourse. It is the objective of the present paper to differentiate between them and contribute into a better understanding of text and discourse nature.

Although *style* is frequently used both in linguistics and literary criticism, it is very difficult to define. Stylistic features, or techniques of arranging units of phonology, morphology, lexicology and syntax so that to affect the meaning conveyed, are basically features of language, so style in one sense is synonymous with language. Further, style as a set of linguistic means characteristic for a particular purpose of communication between given persons in a definite context can also be called a *functional style*, and one can traditionally refer to the style of official and business communication, the style of scientific prose, the newspaper style, the belles-lettres style or the colloquial style. Author's individual "language habits", that is a writer's manner of deliberately choosing language means that will have a certain effect on the reader is known as *idiolect* [1].

The term *register* is similar to the term *style* in that it implies linguistic features that mark communicative situations in particular social setting. However, registers are primarily variations in language use in non-literary situations (e.g. an interview, sports commentary, a telephone conversation, a political speech, legal language) and depend a lot upon the social background, geography, sex and age of the language user. In general, the register of communication, or the speaker's choice of sound, grammar and lexis, is determined by the subject matter of conversation ("field"), the medium of information exchange ("mode"), and social roles of participants ("tenor"). Different registers may overlap with each other in respect of mode or field. Thus, register essentially represents degree of formality, and is important for socio-pragmatic investigations of style.

When distinguishing between "*genre*" and "*register*" some linguists prefer seeing the latter as a particular situational configuration of linguistic resources which is contextually determined. The former is then considered at a "higher level" and viewed as a structure common for groups of texts which are recognized as performing broadly

similar functions in a society (e.g. poem, novel, essay, report). For example, the function of reporting can be performed by different genres of reports – weather reports, progress reports, etc., and within the genre of, say, weather report, there are such registers as TV weather forecasts and newspaper weather summary, which differ in medium-determined linguistic features. So, any group of texts which show a similarity of register can be said to belong to the same genre, and whereas genres can have some common features, no two registers will ever be identical [2: 155-156; 3: 178; 337-338].

The concept of *text type* was first introduced by German linguist Peter Hartman in 1964 and has been considerably revised since then. At the moment text types are defined as limited sets of samples of actual texts with specific shared characteristics, such as the physical form, the characteristic structure (i.e. the use of linguistic means), the situational conditions (including the medium of the texts) and the communicative function of the texts. It is worth mentioning here that while genre seems to be more common in literature (cf. *literary genre*), text type can be found in studies of non-literary, specialist texts, which make use of conventional linguistic resources and layout, but differ in content (e.g. journal abstract, notice, maintenance manual, announcement). Thus, the definition of text types, the number of which is limited, is based on text-internal data whereas definitions of genres, which evolve historically by chance, follow various text-external and text-internal criteria alike (e.g. letter and its many subclasses).

Sometimes the term “*mode of discourse*” is used synonymously with “text type”, even though it is restricted to the characterization of texts according to pragmatic properties, or speaker’s purposes. There are numerous varying classifications of modes of discourse, and the most typical varieties are narration, description, exposition, and argument. These are different ways of viewing the subject and, in fact, a discourse may combine all of them, but it is common to mark the one which organizes the discourse.

References

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