

A Review of Interdiscursivity Studies

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ABSTRACT

Interdiscursivity enables professional communication to be better understood and realized in the professional world. The notion of Interdiscursivity emerged from Critical Discourse Analysis Theory (CDA) proposed by Fairclough research in order to explain how the discourse was related to social practice. CDA viewed social practice and linguistic practice as constituting one another and focused on investigating how societal power relations were established and reinforced through language use. In a broader sense, CDA asserted that a discourse must exist through two concepts: Intertextuality and Interdiscursivity. Intertextuality referred to the shaping of the meaning of a text by other texts. It included an author's borrowing and transformation of a prior text or to a reader's referencing of one text in reading another. Intertextuality was the concept of texts' borrowing of each other's words and concepts. This could mean as much as an entire ideological concept and as little as a word or phrase. As authors borrowed proactively from previous texts, their work gained layers of meaning. On the other hand, Interdiscursivity referred to the implicit or explicit relations that a discourse had to other discourses. Fairclough further stated that Interdiscursivity had a close affinity to recontextualisation because a discourse often relied on another discourse in realizing its meaning. This paper highlights the studies related to the notion of Interdiscursivity to show how the discourse types used by professional writers translated the meaning of professional genres

KEYWORDS: Interdiscursivity, Professional Communication, Professional World, Professional Culture, Professional Genre.

INTRODUCTION

Professional communication does not exist in isolation. It is highly dependent on aspects such as professional culture and practices which are interwoven in order to realize the purpose of communication. Thus, Interdiscursivity plays an important role in understanding professional genres as interdiscursive analysis will produce a better understanding of the complexity of text production in a professional context. It includes a variety of "professional practices" [1] which a textual approach may miss out.

Interdiscursivity Studies

Studies on professional genres have shown that certain discourse types were used to carry different functions in a genre. For example, a press release can have the following functions: to inform, to persuade and to promote. The discourse type used reflected the norms held by the organization.

To begin with, in an influential study, in [1] presented an analytical model of understanding professional discourse which includes features such as textual, genre, professional practice and professional culture in analyzing corporate disclosure documents of fifteen Hong Kong Stock Exchange listed companies. It highlighted that the production of the documents was intertwined within three text-external boundaries known as professional genres, professional practices and professional cultures. These factors have a strong influence on how genres were produced in a DC. Further analysis of the documents found that they fall into four discourse patterns.

Firstly, accounting discourse reported facts and information. This was seen in the discourse "We have audited the accompanying financial statements of PCCW Limited (the 'Company') and its subsidiaries (the 'Group') as at and for the year ended December 31, 2003, set out on pages 71 to 129, which have been prepared in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in Hong Kong . . .".

Secondly, economics discourse highlighted financial information such as profit and loss as seen in the discourse "The increase in revenue was primarily due to the successful pre-sales of Residence XXX project with revenue of HHH million . . .; continuing growth in broadband Internet access business and increased revenue from the IT business in mainland China".

Thirdly, public relations discourse was used to project a positive image of the organizations. This was seen in the discourse "Conditions in the telecommunications business globally and regionally were certainly difficult in 2003 while Hong Kong's own economic, political, competition and public health issues presented (name of

the company) with a particularly challenging environment” and in the form of the chairman’s letter to shareholders, “Despite this, the Company has emerged stronger and better placed to increase shareholder value”.

Finally, legal discourse was used to highlight disclaimer or obligations as seen in the discourse “This annual report may contain forward-looking statements. Although the company believes it has been prudent in its plans and assumptions, there is no assurance that any indicated result will be realized. The company disclaims any intention or obligation to update forward looking statements”.

From this study, it can be concluded that a written genre can achieve many functions as seen in the discourse types used. For example, the accounting discourse reported facts based on financial evidence of the company’s past performance whereas the public relations discourse was used to promote a positive image of the company to its shareholders in order to sustain their confidence in future corporate performance.

Next, in [7] found three discourse patterns in their research on Science Popularization (SP). Analysis of 30 SP news texts in Portuguese and 60 in English showed that there were three discourse patterns. The first one was a scientific discourse which used technical terms characterized by hypotheses. The second one was journalistic discourse that emphasized on fact confirmation and finally pedagogic discourse which transferred scientific information in order for learners.

Similarly, in [6] performed corpus analysis of 100 online group buying deals in Hong Kong. The websites sold food, product and other services online. The buying deals generated five Interdiscursivity functions. The first function was a promotional function used to draw the attention of the website users, to promote the deals of the company and to commit the users to the actual transaction. The function was seen in the discourse types such as “buy now” and “buy it for a friend”.

Secondly, the informative function provided largely factual information on the deal. They could be seen through discourse types such as “selling price”, “original price”, “savings” and “discount”.

A social function was used to establish and strengthen a personal relationship with the website users and to foster the formation of a DC between the group buying website and the actual/potential buyers. They were seen in the discourse types such as “Recommend to friends!” and “Please sign in to post a comment”.

Fourthly, regulatory function was used to specify the regulations regarding the deals. They were denoted by the discourse types “Valid from...” and “Valid for dine- in and take away”.

Finally, instructional function was used to guide the website users through the specific procedures on how to complete the transaction. It was seen in the phrases “Register as group Buyer Member” and “Click Buy to purchase”.

Based on this study, it can be concluded that although online group buying deals were predominantly promoted, they also showed a blend of informative, social, regulatory and instructional types of discourse. This was done through the strategic employment of interdiscursive elements in different move types realized through the types of discourse used. The study also showed that the functions found intended to promote solidarity among users through the use of personal discourse types such as “Recommend to friends!”. They have enabled users to be drawn closer to the deal and buy the goods and services offered.

In a similar study, in [5] described the way the request e-mail authors incorporate intertextual and interdiscursive elements into their discourse of request. Data were collected for a period of two academic years and a total of 815 e-mails were exchanged during the period. Among those e-mails, 115 of them were identified as request emails. Findings suggested that e-mail discourse served four functions.

The first function was distancing themselves to avoid resentment. This can be seen in the discourse “As agreed in the Panel Meeting, ‘normal’ teaching starts from tomorrow. May I remind everybody to work according to the scheme of work set/planned?”.

The second function was convincing others to comply with the requests made. This can be seen in the discourse “Let’s put our heads together and think of more ways to attract them to our world”.

The third function was emphasizing roles which can be seen in the discourse “It may be easier for colleagues to search for appropriate materials for their lessons”.

The final function was managing rapport with email recipients. This can be seen in the discourse “Is it possible that we can have a list of the resource materials in the English Panel file?” and “Don’t think of work. Enjoy the weekend”.

Another study of a similar nature was conducted to examine the discursive practices of arbitration among corporations in order to resolve their business disputes [2]. The study aimed to extract relationship between what transpires during the arbitration process, what is eventually reported in the public media and why it is done that way. It analyzed two professional genres, namely the press releases and online news reports.

Findings suggested that when corporations were faced with arbitration, they used four interdiscursive functions to construct their press releases. The first function was a media function used to project a positive image as seen in the discourse “Vodacom Group has thus far provided all the funding for Vodacom Congo at commercial rates that were explicitly agreed to by minority shareholder CWN. This funding has allowed Vodacom Congo to build infrastructure that connects more than 3.5 million Congolese and the business now

provides direct and indirect employment for more than 6,000 people,’ said Bob Collymore, Chief Officer Corporate Affairs”.

The second function was a corporate mission function which intended to inform public about issues faced by the organization. This can be seen in the discourse “Groupe Danone still hopes we can solve the dispute through peaceful discussion, and we are working hard towards this direction”. Thirdly, legal function showed legal disputes involving the organization. This was seen in the discourse “After more than a year of litigation, an arbitration panel has unanimously ruled that EchoStar Communications Corp. (DISH™ Network) violated its contract with direct broadcast satellite (DBS) licensee Dominion Video Satellite Inc., owner-operator of Sky Angel (sm), the nation’s only faith-based direct-to-home satellite television service and the country’s oldest DBS company”.

Finally, sermon function was used to show the practice of religion. This could be seen in the discourse “We have relied on God for wisdom concerning these matters and have prayed that only His will would ultimately prevail. It is our desire to put this issue behind us and move forward in obedience to the vision that the Lord has given for this important work of ministry,’ said Robert Johnson Jr., Dominion’s CFO and interim CEO”.

Moving on, in [3] studied two promotional news production texts by combining Interdiscursivity analysis of news production processes and textual analysis of Public Relations news. The study aimed to find out why journalists and newspaper editors use PR resources to write newspaper articles. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews and observation with three journalists and three editors of 4 daily newspapers in Slovenia. Analysis of news reports suggested there were two Interdiscursivity functions.

Firstly, to highlight the commercialization of journalism in line with business and political practices. This was obtained from observation and interviews to denote that journalists addressed their readers as consumers rather than participants as a source of democratic power in the society.

Secondly, to highlight profit maximization practices seen through the phrases “very successful”, “Lexus increased added value” and “Lexus improved”. Table 1 summarizes the studies on Interdiscursivity.

Table 1: Summary of interdiscursivity studies

Author	Genre	Interdiscursivity Functions
Roth and Scherer (2016)	Science Popularization	Scientific Journalistic Pedagogic
Lam (2013)	Online group buying deals	Promotional Informative Social Regulatory Instructional
Ho (2011)	Request email	Distancing oneself Convincing others Emphasizing role Managing rapport
Corona (2011)	Press release	Media Corporate mission statement Legal Sermon
Bhatia (2010)	Corporate disclosure documents	Accounting Economics Public relations Legal
Erjavec (2004)	Newspaper reports	Highlighting commercialization of journalism Profit maximization

CONCLUSION

Based on the Interdiscursivity studies reviewed, it can be concluded that professional genres used certain types of discourse to achieve their aims. It was also shown that the use of particular discourse types were able to relay the functions carried by the genre. The functions were as varied as projecting a positive image, informing new business practice, shadowing weaknesses or persuading and convincing.

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