

Genre theory: A horn of plenty for EFL learners

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Abstract

The present article focuses on genre theory and its pedagogical use in the EFL classroom. The functional nature of language is discussed. The article emphasises that people use language to accomplish various communicative and social functions. By incorporating genres into the EFL classroom, learners become aware of how language works in context. Learners concentrate on texts as discourse rather than on their content. It is demonstrated how specific genres, job interviews in particular, can be identified through structural organisation and the various linguistic features within it.

1. Introduction

English language teachers tend to interpret *grammar* from two perspectives, namely a mental system which is a cognitive constituent of a human brain (Chomsky, 1980) and a set of rules about English delineating how it is literally employed (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, & Svartvik, 1985). The first is known as *mental grammar* and the second as *descriptive grammar*. Both positions are very important in language instruction, yet they allow for quite a narrow scope of linguistic analysis. As applied linguistics research reveals (Halliday, 1985; Martin, Matthiessen, & Painter, 1997), there is a third approach, *functional grammar*, which should be more frequently taken into consideration by EFL practitioners. The latter perspective pertains to the grammatical composition which is grounded in the functional concept of the nature of language.

This article will argue that the genre theory, a component of functional grammar, is of great value to EFL students. There are several reasons for such a forthright statement. Firstly, the theory of genre reflects communicative language teaching in that it allows for the analyses of both the formal and functional facets of language in social and cultural contexts. The systemic correlations between forms, functions and meanings are systematically highlighted, as are “language, content, and the context of discourse production and interpretation” (Paltridge, 2001: 2).

Secondly, the theory of genre promotes the teaching of language through authentic situations or functional language activities. Learners have a chance to actively practise doing things with language. The learners are fully aware of their roles as receivers, processors and producers in the communicative process. Learners should be encouraged to regularly respond to diverse communicative situations. Such interaction will provide them with the skills and information that are required for successful communication in different discourse communities (Swales, 1990).

Thirdly, the close relationship of the theory of genre with the theory of register is also helpful in text-based or literature-based English instruction. Both theories can help learners to distinguish between various literary genres as well as perform critical text analysis, demonstrating how meaning is created through language in literary texts and how ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings are realised in texts. Thus, Hyland's (2008: 543) conviction that "genre is one of the most important and influential concepts in literacy education" is well-grounded.

Fourthly, the theory of genre together with the theory of register greatly contribute to the teaching and learning of productive skills. Both theories emphasise that language is a social event. Language used either in the spoken or written modes means being involved in a social activity. The choice of words people make, types of clauses or sentences they construct and the kinds of texts they produce are determined by social reasons. Since speaking and writing are social practices, learners should be made aware that both skills are invariably linked to such social factors as power, gender, age and geographic location.

Fifthly, in ESP and EAP contexts, for instance, the genre theory can help students to learn to construct texts which are not only congruent with the nature, processes and socio-cultural contexts of speaking and writing in the target language, but are also in agreement with discipline-specific situations (e.g. English for business, English for tourism or English for medical professionals). The intricacies of writing business letters, application letters, business emails or discursive essays should be carefully discussed. Likewise, the final products, that is, texts as well as the contexts of their disciplines should be thoroughly investigated and reflected upon. The technical jargon in spoken activities should also be widely practised. If students' attention is consistently drawn to

similarities and differences among genres, they will be better prepared to generate texts in a large array of contexts. For more information on the place and role of genre theory in ESP and EAP contexts see Hyland (1990, 2004); Flowerdew (1993, 2000); Dudley-Evans (1995); Jacoby, Leech and Holten (1995); Bhatia (1997); Swales and Feak (2000); Paltridge (2001); Yan (2005); Bax (2006); Swami (2008) and Myskow and Gordon (2010).

Sixthly, spoken narratives produced by people on different occasions could be used to provide learners with pragmatic nuances of conversational discourse (see Eggins & Slade, 2005). For example, EFL students could analyse words or phrases used for chronological order of events (e.g. at first, while in London, then, etc.). Students could focus on discourse markers employed in the introductions of new topics (e.g. Now ...) or as delaying tactics (... OK ... erm ...). Likewise, EFL students could be provided with conversational strategies which people employ in order to maintain harmony in social relationships, to “save face” and to avoid interpersonal conflicts. In other words, students should be aware of how politeness functions in conversations. What is regarded as polite in one culture is not necessarily good manners in another culture.

As can be seen, genre theory enables students to describe texts in social terms as well as understand the intentions of text producers. *Text* in this article refers to both written and spoken discourse. It additionally makes learners realise that genres are not only extremely culture-specific events, but they are also ubiquitous and all people face them in their everyday lives. The literature has extensively discussed the benefits of various genres for language education. This article will describe how job interviews can be implemented in EFL courses. Job interviews are real-life events and can provide an authentic example to be used in the classroom. It is vital that foreign language learners have a chance to study the structure of job interviews and familiarise themselves with various conventions (e.g. routines and etiquette) which govern them. This analysis should caution students that insufficient knowledge in these respects may result in discrimination and failure against them when facing a competitive job market.

The aim of the first part of this article is to briefly present a critical analysis of the nature of language. The main tenets of the theory of language which underpin Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) are identified. The second part will focus on a theoretical description of the

theory of genre and its relationship to a spoken discourse analysis. It is in this part that the genre of a one-on-one job interview is offered as a useful didactic material.

1.1. Systemic functional linguistics: Its tenets and approach to language

Systemic Functional Linguistics, as opposed to structuralist and interactionist positions, views language as a social semiotic (Halliday, 1975). In other words, language constitutes a vehicle humans apply in order to express or exchange functional meanings in various contexts. This explanation is reflected in Halliday's (1973: 11-15) theory of language functions. According to this theory, children use seven (*instrumental, regulatory, interactional, personal functions, heuristic, imaginative, and representational*) functions in order to adjust to the surrounding reality. There is a tendency, as Halliday (1973) notes, for these functions to merge with the age of the language users. Adult speakers end up using three metafunctions simultaneously: *ideational, interpersonal* and *textual*. The ideational function represents ideas about the world in the content of a text, whereas the interpersonal function reflects the social and interpersonal relationship between interactants (Halliday & Hassan, 1976). The textual function connects the ideas and interactions mentioned above into meaningful texts (Halliday & Hassan, 1976). It can be surmised that in the semiotic system of adults the three metafunctions assume the system of grammar. The mechanism for various functions is then able to be integrated in a text (Halliday & Webster, 2006).

Since SF linguists regard language as a systematic resource for accomplishing language functions, the implication is that the organising principle in linguistic description is not a grammatical structure but a system. Language is no longer seen as being comprised of sentences but of "text" (Halliday, 1996: 89). Unlike structural linguistics, which seeks to identify generalised units (e.g. sentence patterns), SFL establishes its description of language on choice-making or "a discrete network of options" (Halliday, 1978: 113). Particular choices not only depend on the context in which the language is used, but they also relate to the three strata of language known as *phonological/graphological, lexico-grammatical*, and *discourse-semantic* (Eggins, 2004). In other words, when people construct texts, they make choices about what and how they

intend to say/write something; this, in turn, is affected by who their interlocutors/audience are and in what situation/context everyone happens to be. As far as the three levels of language are concerned, they are all detailed in terms of systems and structures. Systems handle the paradigmatic groups of choices accessible in the language. Structures, on the other hand, display the choices from the systems in the form of syntagmatic structures whose components convey functions assigned by the system choices. The assumption is that all the linguistic structures are natural since they signify the meanings needed in a particular context. Language is understood to exist “because of its life in social interaction” (Halliday & Yallop, 2007: 50) and it must be analysed in context. This seems to indicate that SFL is similar to the theories of Berger and Luckmann (1966) and Vygotsky (1978), who state that humans construct the extra-linguistic world through language. They all agree that social reality is integral to the formation of the semantic system in which the social world is concealed.

Vital information for the EFL classroom is conveyed through SFL where both meaning and context prevail over linguistic form. Context provides meaning and purpose to texts. These texts are semantic units which are not comprised of sentences, yet are realised in sentences. The integrity between language and social order elucidate how humans employ language in social situations and “what language is required to do in those contexts” (Butzkamm, 2000: 235). Systemic Functional Linguistics communicates to EFL students that language operates semantically, grammatically and phonologically/orthographically, at the same time interrelating within the socio-cultural context.

1.2. Context of culture in text: The theory of genre

In light of the above, SFL delineates language in categories of its semantic function in the social as well as cultural contexts within which language is employed. This directly leads us to the theory of genre, which, as Martin, Christie and Rothery (1994: 232) note, “is a theory of language use.” Additionally, Martin (1985: 250) argues that “genres are how things get done, when language is used to accomplish them.” Turning to Eggins and Slade (2005), we find that genre theory illustrates how humans apply language to attain cultural goals. Genres need to be

recognised as purposeful, step-by-step organised activities (Martin, 1984) shared as well as interactively constructed by cultures.

According to Frow (2006), despite sharing communicative purposes, genres are conventionally structured. It is the schematic structure, as Christie and Unsworth (2000) observe, that enables communicative purposes to be achieved. This is true because it is impossible for people to make all the meanings they wish at once. The schematic structure in genres brings together parts of the complete meanings that must be produced so that genres can be successfully realised (Martin, 1985). Interpreting genres in this particular manner, we make it clear that the number of genres equals the number of clear-cut social activities in our cultural context. It follows that apart from literary genres, which are excluded from this discussion, there are various types of everyday genres in which people are actively involved. Everyday genres refer to such things as gossiping, buying and selling things, as well as attending job interviews. All of these activities represent re-utilised or, as Berger and Luckmann (1966) note, habitualised undertakings. As far as habitualisation in developing genres goes, Martin and Rose (2003: 7) reveal that:

[a]s children, we learn to recognise and distinguish the typical genres of our culture, by attending to consistent patterns of meaning as we interact with others in various situations. Since patterns of meaning are relatively consistent for each genre, we can learn to predict how each situation is likely to unfold, and learn how to interact in it.

On the other hand, Bakhtin's (1986) opinion is similar to Martin and Rose's. He asserts that:

[w]e learn to cast our speech in generic forms and, when hearing others' speech, we guess its genre from the very first words; we predict a certain length (that is, the approximate length of the speech whole) and a certain compositional structure; we foresee the end; that is, from the very beginning we have a sense of the speech whole, which is only later differentiated during the speech process.

(Bakhtin, 1986: 78-79)

In the preceding quotation, Bakhtin clarifies that genres establish linguistic expression through a number of "functional stages" (Eggin, 2004: 58) or "functional moves" (Gruber, 2006: 98), which develop in a certain sequence. All these stages, being constitutive segments of genres, are described in functional terms. The stages are provided with labels

which mirror achieved social purposes. For instance, the social purpose and functional labels of a review can be presented as follows (see Figure 1):

GENRE	review
PURPOSE	to assess a work of literature
STAGES	{Context \wedge Text Description \wedge Judgement}

Figure 1. The social purpose and functional labels of a review

These individual stages are easily recognisable due to specific semantic and lexico-grammatical choices through which the stages are realised (Eggins & Slade, 2005).

Linguistic patterns, though, take us to another facet of SFL, namely register, which occurs in a precisely defined correlation with genre where the former represents the context of situation and the latter reflects the context of culture (Eggins & Martin, 1997). Both of them are not only semiotic systems accomplished through language, but also linked with situations of use. Therefore, the structure and lexico-grammar of texts can be determined. It may be inferred that Martin's (1992) definition of the genre-register relationship in terms of layering is strikingly cogent.

Martin (1992) reveals that genre subsumes and enhances the stratum of register, which comprises three "register variables" (Martin & Rose, 2003: 243): *field*, *tenor* and *mode*. The field variable plays the role of the social setting and pertains to the purpose of a text, including all the activities the interactants are involved in (Halliday & Hasan, 1985). The tenor characterises the nature of interactants, their social statuses and roles as well as the emotional issues of a speech event (Patten, 1988). The mode reveals the media employed in communication, concurrently referring to the social function a text is performing (Stockwell, 2002). This brief presentation of the three registerial variables allows us to return to Halliday's three metafunctions mentioned at the beginning of this discussion (see 1.1). As Matthiessen (2006: 39) comments, it is the field, tenor and mode that "resonate with the three metafunctions in language." Hence, the systemic functional view of grammar clarifies that the scope of field matches the ideational metafunction, reflecting our experience of reality. The scope of tenor coincides with the interpersonal

metafunction, and portrays our social relations, whereas the scope of mode with the textual metafunction, constructs semiotic reality, displaying messages as texts in different contexts.

1.2.1. Genre analysis in a job interview

Having presented the main tenets of SFL and discussed the concept of genre, it now seems fitting to put the theory into practice. The theory of genre and the three variables of register can help EFL students to successfully tease out various social meanings from texts. The students can then understand these texts as the creators meant the texts to be understood. A one-on-one job interview, serving as interesting didactic material, can be used as an example (see Appendix 1).

The recorded and then transcribed job interview selected for the purpose of this article is underpinned by McDermott's (2006) considerations of the nature of job interviews, discussed in his *Interview Excellence: 12 Step Programme to Job Interview Success*. The transcription of this interview comes from one of the EFL schools in Warsaw, Poland. The interview was conducted in English, yet it should be clarified that only the more prestigious schools interview candidates in English. Certain details in the enclosed transcript have been changed in order to abide by the *Data Protection Act*.

According to McDermott (2006), a job interview can be divided into stages. In Figure 2, the macrogenre structure of the interview under study is presented as follows:



Figure 2. Macrogenre structure of the job interview

The schematic structure of this job interview indicates that it consists of three stages: the *Introduction Stage*, *Exploration Stage* and *Closure Stage*. All of them are discussed below.

The **Introduction Stage** (IS), as McDermott (2006) notes, functions as a short exchange of pleasantries and ice breaking (see Figure 3).

T U R N	S T A G E		S P E A K E R	TEXT
1.	I N T R O D U C T I O N		T	(i)Good afternoon. (ii)I'm looking for Mr Smith ...
2.			P	(i)Oh, (ii)yes ... (iii)Mrs Brown? (iv)You ... (v)want to teach our young learner groups, (vi)don't you? (vii)Please come in. (viii)I am the Principal ... (ix)John Smith. (x)How do you do?
3.			T	(i)How do you do. ... (ii)Ann Brown ... (iii)Nice to meet you.
4.			P	(i)Please sit down. (ii)Tea? (iii)Coffee?
5.			T	(i)Coffee please ... (ii)no sugar (iii)and no milk
6.			P	(i)Right ... (ii)no sugar (iii)and no milk ... (iv)OK ... (leaves the office) ... (comes back to the office) (v)here's your coffee ...
7.			T	(i)Thank you very much.
8.			P	(i)well ... (ii)since we have a limited time for this interview ... (iii)we have three other interviews later on ... (iv)Shall we start then?
9.			T	(i)Certainly ... (ii)yes ...

Figure 3. The introduction stage of the job interview

Two overlapping contexts can be seen. The first one regards greetings and the teacher asking for Mr Smith. He, in turn, calls the teacher by a title and her surname not only to indicate familiarity, but also to inform her that she has been expected. On this basis it can also be deduced that Mrs Brown has arrived on time. The second context, the more immediate context of situation, refers to when Mr Smith offers Mrs Brown a drink. This situation implies that the principal wants the teacher to feel welcome and her choice of coffee with no milk and no sugar confirms she enjoys Mr Smith's hospitality and feels fairly relaxed.

In the actual interview, Mr Smith points out that he has three other candidates to question, so they should quickly proceed with the interview. As a result, "the Setting the Scene Stage," which should deal with the purpose and goals of the interview as well as a brief presentation of the school and the vacant job position, is omitted. This, in turn, conflicts with McDermott's (2006) view concerning an excellent interview. He believes the interview proper should begin with small talk so that the interviewee has a chance to provide some personal information and relax before the stages begin. As can be seen, Mrs Brown accepts the invitation to continue, yet pauses to add "yes" to indicate she has been put on guard.

The **Exploration Stage** (ES), as McDermott (2006: 24) observes, deals with questions and answers. The purpose is to define whether the interviewee meets the employer's requirements and "match[es] the

Cultural Fit of the organization.” The ES, taking the form of a personal narrative, can be divided into three sub-stages: the *Educational Background* (EB), the *Teaching Experience* (TE), and the *Teaching Preferences* (TP) respectively (see Figure 4).

T U R N	S T A G E		S P E A K E R	TEXT
10.	E X P L O R A T I O N	E D U C A T I O N A L B A C K G R O U N D	P	(i)Please tell me about your academic background starting with ... (ii)erm ... (iii)post-secondary
11.			T	(i)OK ... (ii)well ... (iii)at first ... (iv)hmm ... (v)I went to the Teacher Training College in Warsaw ... (vi)I graduated with distinction ... (vii)my specialisation area was ELT methodology ...
12.			P	(i)OK
13.			T	(i)Then, ... (ii)erm ... (iii)I went to England ... (iv)had a two-year break in my education ... (v)erm ... (vi)I wanted to get to know the place and people better ... (vii)you know ...
14.			P	(i)Interesting ...
15.			T	(i)While in London, (ii)I did an intensive CELTA course, (iii)then went back home ... (iv)to Warsaw I mean ... (v)and began an MA course at Warsaw University ... (vi)which took me another two years ...
16.			P	(i)Day student or extramural?
17.			T	(i)Day
18.			P	(i)All right ... (ii)Was it ELT methodology again or a different specialisation?
19.			T	(i)Still the same ... (ii)well, (iii)I was thinking about doing American literature, (iv)but ... (v)erm ... (vi)changed my mind ...
20.			P	(i)Any particular reason?
21.			T	(i)Well ... (ii)I wanted to teach, (iii)so obviously ELT methodology seemed to be a better option, after all.
22.			P	(i)I see. (ii)All right ... (iii)How about your teaching experience? ... (iv)Shall we move to this point?
23.	T E A C H I N G E X P E R I E N C E		T	(i)Of course, ... (ii)well ... (iii)it was quite a while ago ... (iv)all right, (v)at first ... (vi)erm ... (vii)I worked in a kindergarten ... (viii)private one in Wola ... (ix)I was there for about 3 years. (x)Then ... (xi)I taught in a primary school ... (xii)still the same part of Warsaw ... (xiii)erm ... (xiv)for another 4 years ... (xv)And now ... (xvi)yes ... (xvii)I would like to teach here (xviii)as I have moved (xix)and your school is much closer to my new flat.
24.			P	(i)Why young learners, (ii)if I may ask?
25.			T	(i)Well ... (ii)there are many reasons ... (iii)erm ...
26.	P	(i)Three will do ... (ii)I guess ...		
27.	P R E F E R E N C E S		T	(i)Let me think then ... (ii)OK ... (iii)erm ... (iv)number one ... (v)I like children very much, (vi)two would be ... (vii)it brings a lot of challenges (viii)and three ... (ix)erm ... (x)teaching kids is very rewarding ...

Figure 4. The exploration stage of the job interview

In the EB sub-stage, Mrs Brown is asked to present her educational background starting with her post-secondary education. She provides a concise answer on her prior ELT methodology training, adding that she

graduated with distinction. Then, she talks about her two-year stay in England, where she wanted to be immersed in the target language culture. In the end, Mrs Brown provides additional information about the successful completion of the Cambridge CELTA course. She explains that she returned to Poland and finished her MA as a day student.

An interesting observation is made when the principal asks the teacher whether she was a day or extramural student. This inquiry was probably supposed to lead to another question, namely: What did she do during the day if she was an extramural student? This can be related to Gillham's (2005) method of perceiving a successful interview in which questions have to be purposeful and lead to another question or interviewee characterisation. When Mrs Brown answers that she was a day student, she broke the linear sequence of the interview. As a result, the principal inquires whether she still pursued ELT methodology in order to check whether she had additional skills to add to her credibility. Mrs Brown, in turn, answers that she was thinking of studying American literature but she changed her mind. Mr Smith asks for clarification, as he probably wanted to see if the woman makes decisions based on thought out ideas or on whims.

In the TE sub-stage, Mrs Brown states her vast experience with young learners, ranging from kindergarten to primary school, always providing the length of employment. This fact shows she is a stable employee and her new address in the school's locality will probably make her stay in the school for some time, which is of great importance. Mrs Brown is open and honest in all her answers, simultaneously appealing to the employer. He does not probe the experience stage any further and goes on to the sub-stage of teaching preferences.

In the TP sub-stage, Mr Smith asks Mrs Brown why she wants to teach young learners. Such questioning shows that Mr Smith is an employer who wants to familiarise himself with his staff, their motivations and fundamental reasons for being a teacher. Mrs Brown seems to be unsure in this part of the interview and flounders by saying there are so many answers. The repeated use of the "erm" marker is an indication of her fumbling. The second reason she gives is not fully understood since she states that teaching children can be challenging. This is to her advantage, yet she should have added that she feels stimulated to work harder by being challenged. Her teaching experience

with children reveals she has never thought about what makes her want to teach them.

The purpose of the last stage, the **Closure Stage (CS)**, is to express thanks to each other and exchange pleasantries and farewells (Hargie, Dickson & Tourish, 1999) (see Figure 5).

T U R N	S T A G E		S P E A K E R	TEXT
28.	C L O S U R E		P	(i)Thank you, Mrs Brown. (ii)I've already seen your documentation (iii)but as I said ... (iv)erm ... (v)we still have three more candidates today. (vi)Now ... (vii)do you have any questions ... (viii)perhaps?
29.			T	(i)Not really, (ii)definitely will have a few (iii)when I am employed ... (iv)erm ... (v)the timetable, (vi)course books ... (vii)this kind of things ...
30.			P	(i)Well ... (ii)you'll be contacted about the result by our secretary tomorrow ... (iii)5pm at the latest.
31.			T	(i)Thank you very much, Mr Smith.
32.			P	(i)Thank you (ii)and hope to work with you soon.
33.			T	(i)Bye.
34.			P	(i)Have a nice day ... (ii)Goodbye.

Figure 5. The closure stage of the job interview

In the final stage of the interview, Mr Smith asks Mrs Brown if she has any questions. This is a good technique as interviewees are made to feel part of the interview (Hargie, Dickson & Tourish, 1999). The employer is viewed as a cordial person who respects others. However, Mrs Brown says she has no questions now, but she will have some about the course books and timetable when she is employed. This kind of behaviour can be perceived as a clever way to enquire whether she has passed her interview even though she has been formally informed that she will be contacted by the school secretary the following day.

The discussion of the schematic structure of the job interview would not be complete without mentioning the important role of questions in the marking of the functional stages. This phenomenon is extremely visible in the ES of the interview (see Figure 4), where some sub-stages begin with questions marking new functional moves. For instance, the TE sub-stage begins with *How about your teaching experience?*, whereas in the TP sub-stage the question is: *Why young learners, if I may ask?*

Having presented the schematic structure of the job interview, it is necessary to have a brief look at its language. It is important to note that,

despite being a piece of spoken discourse, the job interview, as opposed to everyday talk, is a formal conversation with traces of convention as well as educational jargon. For instance, grammatical analysis reveals that functional stages, as befits spoken discourse, are realised by phrases (e.g. *day student*) and elliptical declaratives (e.g. *definitely will have a few when I am employed*) rather than complete sentences. Nonetheless, some examples of complete sentences can be found; in most cases, they are interrogative sentences (e.g. *Shall we move to this point?*). What is more, since the interview is produced in real time, numerous pauses, as well as hesitation and repetition discourse markers (e.g. *erm, you know, well, OK*) are employed, simultaneously organising its turns (Müller, 2005) and making it more cohesive (Schiffrin, 1987). For example, the discourse markers frequently appear in question/answer pairs (e.g. *Any particular reason? Well ... I wanted to teach, so obviously ELT methodology seemed to be a better option, after all.*), introductions of new discourse topics (e.g. *Now ... do you have any questions ... perhaps?*) or as delaying tactics (e.g. *Let me think then ... OK ... erm ...*), giving the interactants time to collect their thoughts (Paltridge, 2006). According to Schiffrin (1987), from among the discourse markers we can further distinguish markers of participation (e.g. *I wanted to get to know the place and people better ... you know ...*), markers of cause and result (e.g. *Well ... I wanted to teach, so obviously ELT methodology seemed to be a better option, after all.*) and, finally, markers of transition (*Then ... I taught in a primary school ...*).

As with constructional patterns, lexical choices also contribute to the formation of functional stages of genres (Rothery, 1996). In this job interview, all three stages show different lexical realisations. They are presented in Figure 6 below.

STAGE	SUB-STAGE	LEXICAL RELATIONS
INTRODUCTION		good afternoon, how do you do?, please come in.
EXPLORATION	EDUCATION BACKGROUND	post-secondary, Teacher Training College, graduate with distinction, specialisation
	TEACHING EXPERIENCE	worked in a kindergarten, taught in a primary school
	TEACHING PREFERENCES	young learners, children
CLOSURE		thank you, goodbye

Figure 6. Lexical realisations in the job interview

1.2.2. Three variables of register: Field, tenor and mode

Texts are invariably determined by genre and register. For this reason, the theory of genre cannot be fully discussed without making at least some references to the theory of register. The final aspect of the job interview to be described is the registerial variables of field, tenor and mode. All three of the dimensions are of vital importance as they strongly affect language use. For instance, the interview's field describes what is happening during the interview; the principal offers Mrs Brown a drink. This offer is the experiential meaning to make her feel comfortable and relaxed. Throughout the interview, it can be assumed that Mrs Brown is drinking her coffee, whilst the principal conducts the interview. He is holding the teacher's portfolio and the intended list of interview questions.

The principal asks different types of questions since he wants to assess the candidate's suitability for the vacant position. At the same time, Mrs Brown is given a chance not only to discuss her skills, competencies and experience, but also to positively present herself as an efficient and meticulous future employee. In these questions and answers, the participants more often than not employ both lexical and grammatical technical terms. These terms are used to discuss and assess an already shared knowledge base. In the present interview, the technicality, one of the features of the field variable, is represented by such phrases as *ELT methodology* or *CELTA course*. As a result, job interviews as genres appear to be ritualised games in which interactants are obliged to follow various genre-specific rules so as to succeed in achieving their communicative goals.

The tenor, which describes social role relationships that interactants play in different situations, is analysed in terms of *power*, *contact* and *affective involvement* (Eggins, 2004). According to Poynton's (1985) presentation of the three dimensions, the interview in question presents a situation in which the roles played by the two interactants are described as having unequal power. The first indication of unequal power appears in the description of the interview's field above, where it is the principal, not the prospective employee, that is in the position to offer coffee. Furthermore, the relationship between the participants is decided by their roles (or occupational positions) as well as their titles and surnames. Mr Smith introduces himself as the principal of the school and refers to Mrs

Brown as the teacher who is interested in teaching young learner groups. Moreover, it is Mr Smith who is asking the questions. Mrs Brown produces the narrative, which is expected to be formed in a particular way so that her account of herself is fully coherent. As can be seen in the interview transcript, the teacher does have some questions but decides to ask them after she has been offered a contract. Such a decision can also be an indication of imbalance in the relationship between the participants. In contrast to informal situations, both the interviewer and the interviewee are not emotionally involved in the situation and use formal forms of address (e.g. *Mr Smith* or *Mrs Brown*). The conversation is fairly brief and there is no room for elements of controversy and disagreement, both of which are characteristic features of high affective involvement (Eggins, 2004). In turn, the relationship between the interactants can be described as open and honest.

Finally, the mode, covering the role language performs in the job interview, affects the formal character of the conversation with its lexicogrammatical choices controlling its textual coherence and cohesion. The type of distance in the relation between the language and the situation in the present job interview can be described as *spatial/interpersonal* (Martin, 1984). The interactants both see and hear each other, which enables them to easily provide immediate feedback. In this face-to-face interaction, with the principal's occasional references to the teacher's CV or portfolio, the language used is devoid of the spontaneity typical of spoken discourse. The entire situation of checking the suitability of the candidate for the advertised position is extremely formal. The conversation contains numerous hesitations, false starts and phrases, yet it is organised according to careful turn-by-turn sequencing of talk. During the conversation, varied standard grammatical conventions and prestigious vocabulary are used.

2. Conclusion

The preceding discussion carries a vital message for language education, making aspects of systemic-functional linguistics a necessity rather than a choice. The deliberation underscores the communicative role of language and the social context in which language is embedded. It is the situational and cultural contexts that determine the type of language people employ to create texts. It is necessary to teach how various kinds

of language are used in daily life, and second how various genres are created and utilised in different contexts. The more often students focus on organisational and stylistic characteristics of diverse genres during English lessons, the more effective the students will be in making textual predictions and contextual deductions. Students using these methods can then be ensured of success in educational as well as social contexts. Is this not what modern language education aims for?

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APPENDIX 1: JOB INTERVIEW

T U R N	S T A G E		S P E A K E R	TEXT
1.	I N T R O D U C T I O N		T	(i)Good afternoon. (ii)I'm looking for Mr Smith ...
2.			P	(i)Oh, (ii)yes ... (iii)Mrs Brown? (iv)You ... (v)want to teach our young learner groups, (vi)don't you? (vii)Please come in. (viii)I am the Principal ... (ix)John Smith. (x)How do you do?
3.			T	(i)How do you do. ... (ii)Ann Brown ... (iii)Nice to meet you.
4.			P	(i)Please sit down. (ii)Tea? (iii)Coffee?
5.			T	(i)Coffee please ... (ii)no sugar (iii)and no milk
6.			P	(i)Right ... (ii)no sugar (iii)and no milk ... (iv)OK ... (leaves the office) ... (comes back to the office) (v)here's your coffee ...
7.				(i)Thank you very much.
8.				(i)well ... (ii)since we have a limited time for this interview ... (iii)we have three other interviews later on ... (iv)Shall we start then?
9.			T	(i)Certainly ... (ii)yes ...
10.	E X P L O R A T I O N		P	(i)Please tell me about your academic background starting with ... (ii)erm ... (iii)post-secondary
11.			T	(i)OK ... (ii)well ... (iii)at first ... (iv)hmm ... (v)I went to the Teacher Training College in Warsaw ... (vi)I graduated with distinction ... (vii)my specialisation area was ELT methodology ...
12.			P	(i)OK

13.		T	(i)Then, ... (ii)erm ... (iii)I went to England ... (iv)had a two-year break in my education ... (v)erm ... (vi)I wanted to get to know the place and people better ... (vii)you know ...
14.		P	(i)Interesting ...
15.		T	(i)While in London, (ii)I did an intensive CELTA course, (iii)then went back home ... (iv)to Warsaw I mean ... (v)and began an MA course at Warsaw University ... (vi)which took me another two years ..
16.		P	(i)Day student or extramural?
17.		T	(i)Day
18.		P	(i)All right ... (ii)Was it ELT methodology again or a different specialisation?
19.		T	(i)Still the same ... (ii)well, (iii)I was thinking about doing American literature, (iv)but ... (v)erm ... (vi)changed my mind ...
20.		P	(i)Any particular reason?
21.		T	(i)Well ... (ii)I wanted to teach, (iii)so obviously ELT methodology seemed to be a better option, after all.
22.		P	(i)I see. (ii)All right ... (iii)How about your teaching experience? ... (iv)Shall we move to this point?
23.		T	(i)Of course, ... (ii)well ... (iii)it was quite a while ago ... (iv)all right, (v)at first ... (vi)erm ... (vii)I worked in a kindergarten ... (viii)private one in Wola ... (ix)I was there for about 3 years. (x)Then ... (xi)I taught in a primary school ... (xii)still the same part of Warsaw ... (xiii)erm ... (xiv)for another 4 years ... (xv)And now ... (xvi)yes ... (xvii)I would like to teach here (xviii)as I have moved (xix)and your school is much closer to my new flat.

24.	T E A C H I N G	P R E F E R E N C E S	P	(i)Why young learners, (ii)if I may ask?
25.			T	(i)Well ... (ii)there are many reasons ... (iii)erm ...
26.			P	(i)Three will do ... (ii)I guess ...
27.			T	(i)Let me think then ... (ii)OK ... (iii) erm ... (iv)number one ... (v)I like children very much, (vi)two would be ... (vii)it brings a lot of challenges (viii)and three ... (ix)erm ... (x)teaching kids is very rewarding ...
28.	C L O S U R E		P	(i)Thank you, Mrs Brown. (ii)I've already seen your documentation (iii)but as I said ... (iv)erm ... (v)we still have three more candidates today. (vi)Now ... (vii)do you have any questions ... (viii)perhaps?
29.			T	(i)Not really, (ii)definitely will have a few (iii)when I am employed ... (iv)erm ... (v)the timetable, (vi)course books ... (vii)this kind of things ...
30.			P	(i)Well ... (ii)you'll be contacted about the result by our secretary tomorrow ... (iii)5pm at the latest.
31.			T	(i)Thank you very much, Mr Smith.
32.			P	(i)Thank you (ii)and hope to work with you soon.
33.			T	(i)Bye.
34.			P	(i)Have a nice day ... (ii)Goodbye.