

6 Text Typology

Text typology is concerned with the identification of the criteria leading to the classification (typology) of texts (or *text types*, *text classes*, *styles*, *genres*). Depending on the criteria adopted, there are several possibilities of classifying texts. Using some of the most obvious criteria, texts can be classified as spoken or written, dialogical or monological, spontaneous (unprepared) or ritual (prepared), informal or formal, individual (personal) and interindividual (interpersonal), private or public (official, institutional), subjective or objective, interactional (contact-oriented) and transactional (message-oriented), etc. However, all text types identified on the basis of a single criterion, in contrast with those based on several criteria (*simplex* vs. *complex* styles, K. Hausenblas 1972; *secondary* vs. *primary* styles, Mistrík 1997), often include instances which may reveal a more complicated patterning of features than those suggested by these dichotomies (see also Medium and Participation, 3.2.2); for example, news bulletin scripts read by newscasters, dictation of a letter to a secretary, ritualized exchanges (greetings, politeness formulae) characterizing conversations, interactional features contained in otherwise transactional encounters (lectures), etc. (cf. Ferenčík 2000).

Dolník and Bajzíková (1998) maintain that it is possible to approach texts as either theoretical linguistic constructs (*text typology*), or as concrete 'psychological realities' (*text classification*). The latter approach is based on the intuition possessed by every language user which is acquired through his/her practical experience with the production of texts and which represents a component of his/her communicative (stylistic) competence. The authors have it that one of the most important criteria is based on the study of the ways that dominating *communicative functions* of texts determine the choice of expressive means of language; e.g., in appeals, warnings, public notices the conative function dominates, in congratulations or expressions of sympathy it is the phatic function, in research reports the representational function, in advertising the persuasive function, etc. (3.4). The functional perspective initiated the Prague school functional stylistics and the elaboration of the *theory of functional styles* (K. Havránek, M. Jelínek); functional approach is also present in the approaches of Galperin (1977) who differentiates five functional styles of English (*the publicistic, newspaper, scientific prose, belles-lettres styles and the style of official documents*), and of Crystal and Davy (1969) who offer an in-depth analysis of five 'languages' (*conversation, unscripted commentary, religion, newspaper reporting and legal documents*), but suggest possibilities for the study of other varieties as well (*the language of TV and press advertising, public speaking, written instructions, broadcast talks and news, science, the civil service and the spoken legal language*). It should be noted that the variation based on the functional (contextual) criterion represents one of the three principal types of variation of national language (the other two being regional and social variation, see 9.3).

Using the degree of abstraction (generalization) as the main criterion of text typology, the *functional styles* could stand at the top, followed by the styles of particular social groups and/or traditions of literary writing (*interindividual styles*), the styles of an individual authors (*individual or personal styles*) and the styles of individual texts (*singular styles*) (cf. Hoffmannová 1997).

The criterion of the 'global area of activity' as proposed by Dolník and Bajzíková (1998) is close to the identification of functional styles in that they identify *journalistic, economic, political, legal* and *scientific* texts. We consider their empirically based text classification firmly rooted in the structural-functional theory of text (toward which language users intuitively orient) as a viable approach since it integrates the criteria of communicative function, situation (context) and strategy.

6.1 Functional Classification

The functional classification identifies illocutionary text types according to the type of the dominating illocutionary act (see 10.2): *representative* or *assertive type* (e.g., research reports, public notices, administrative texts, weather forecasts, diaries, CVs, lectures), *directive type* (e.g., commands, orders, invitations, instructions, directions, giving advice), *expressive type* (e.g., apologies, thank-you notes, greetings, condolences, compliments, toasts, congratulations), *commissive type* (e.g., promises, pledges, swears, offers, vows, contracts, bets), *declarative* or *performative type* (e.g., nominations, appointments, dismissals, accusations: *I find you guilty as charged*, marriage ceremonies, testaments, certificates). Texts viewed from this perspective satisfy diverse communicative needs of the society members.

6.2 Situational Classification

The situational classification sorts out texts according to the 'sphere of activity' (e.g., private, official or public, such as a private letter, a letter addressed to an institution) and 'form of communication' (dialogical and monological, spoken and written texts).

6.3 Strategic Classification

The strategic classification deals primarily with the topic and the ways of its expansion (the term *slohové postupy* is used in Slovak stylistics to denote macrocompositional principles, cf. Mistrik 1997): *narrative, descriptive, and argumentative*.

6.3.1 *Narration*, considered to be the most common and culture-universal genre, in its basic (unmarked) way of presentation follows a series of structural steps forming its universal template (Labov 1972): a) *abstract* providing a 'title' for a story, b) *orientation* giving information on the time, setting, characters and their roles, c) *complicating action* presenting a 'problem' which must be overcome by characters in order to attain their goal, d) *resolution* signalling the attainment of the goal and e) *coda* bringing the story 'back' to the beginning by providing a moral, summary, relevance, etc. Dispersed throughout a narrative (e.g., in the form of bracketed asides or side sequences, see Goffman's Bracket signals, 3.3.1), *evaluation* may contribute to the upkeep of suspense and listeners' involvement. Alternatively, stories may rearrange the unmarked sequence of steps (departing thus from the principle of iconicity) by their beginning at various points in narrative (e.g., *in medias res*). While individual steps are conventionally signalled by sets of markers (e.g., *One summer's day ...*), the right for the provision of an uninterrupted turn for the narrator is claimed by a 'ticket' (*Did I ever tell you about ... ?*, or *Something similar happened to me once ...*). The *plot* in narrative fiction is based on a parallel principle: *exposition, conflict* and *dénouement* (or 'unknotting', resolution).

6.3.2 *Description* of a *static* type lists (enumerates) typical features of an object or topic described in an orderly fashion: from more to less important features, from a whole to its parts, from the outside to the inside, etc. In *dynamic* (processual, procedural) descriptions a temporal order of procedures is binding (e.g., recipes for making a food dish, instruction manuals). Static descriptions make frequent use of presentatives (*there is/are*), relative clauses, descriptive adjectives, prepositional and adverbial phrases; procedural descriptions abound in imperatives, passive constructions, purpose clauses (*To switch to a different line ...*), impersonal

constructions (*It is advisable to make a backup copy of your disks*), but also in assertions understood as directives (*You use environment variables to control the behaviour of some batch files ...*), etc.

6.3.3 *Argumentation*, a process whereby a disputable position is supported (cf. Schiffrin 1987), has been identified as “the basic organizational force underlying all linguistic communication” (Verschueren 1999:46). Hatch (1992) offers the following stages of a classical model of argumentation: *introduction, explanation of the case under consideration, outline of the argument, proof, refutation* (i.e., disproof) and *conclusion*. The genre has many variants (cf. Schiffrin’s (1987) three stages: *position, dispute* and *support*) and may be culturally determined.

Some authors identify *explication* (Dolník and Bajzíková 1998) as a specific strategy whereby the nature of phenomena is explained, and *information* (Mistrík 1997) which provides a simple list of relevant features regardless of their mutual relations.

6.4 Genres

Speech events of the same type are identified as belonging to particular **genres** (*schemes, schemata, discourse structures, macro-structures, rhetorical structures*), e.g., ‘simple’: conversations, speeches, poems, reports, letters, essays, or ‘complex’: religious service comprising prayers, sermons, psalms, etc. Genres are characterized by the distinctiveness of their subject matter, structures, strategies and language. They may be approached from the viewpoint of macrocompositional strategies (e.g., conversational narrative, literary narrative) or functional styles (e.g., minutes, public announcements, invitation letters, decrees, questionnaires, certificates, application forms, contracts, etc. are all genres belonging to the administrative style); some genres, however, may belong to more than one functional style (e.g., private letter, business letter, a novel consisting of letters, or an epistolary novel).

Universally recognized **literary genres** and subgenres are *poetry* (epic, lyrical), *drama* (comedy, tragedy) and *fiction* (novel, short story). However, the transition between literary and non-literary genres is smooth (e.g., science fiction, essay, postmodern novel).

From among other theories of text classification, we can also mention the one which utilizes the method of **componential analysis** working (analogically to phonology and semantics) with distinctive features of texts presented in dichotomies, e.g., *an internet chat session* can be characterized as: -spoken, +written, -monological, +dialogical, -formal, +informal, -prepared, +spontaneous, etc. The problem of this procedure, however, rests in the inability to characterize the communication events in either/or terms and in the inevitability to assign both markers (+/-) in the majority of cases.

In conclusion, elaboration of a fully exhaustive and universally applicable method of text typology remains one of the most challenging tasks of text linguistics, stylistics and rhetoric.