Genre Stratification of the English Corporate Imagemaking Discourse

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Abstract. The article focuses on analyzing genres of the present-day English corporate imagemaking discourse. The genre system of the studied discourse includes three groups of genres, such as traditional PR-genres, PR-genres that are not used by journalists and function outside media and genres with an indirect image strategy. All of them are united by a single communicative purpose – to create a positive corporate image of a company. Image genres are marked by artificial nature, orientation at the values and interests of the communication participants and responsibility of the author of the text before the company and the consumers of its product.

Keywords: corporate imagemaking discourse, genre, linguistic genealogy, genre system, PR-text

Introduction. The present research offers analysis of the genre system of the English corporate imagemaking discourse. Corporate imagemaking has become one of the most quickly developing areas of discourse. This resulted from several factors, including the availability of new technology in business communication, a massive information explosion, and, as a consequence, the compulsive nature of advertising and promotional activities in business and the essentially competitive nature of many business activities.

The choice of the object of this study is primarily due to the increase in the value of communication in business, which determines the importance of its research for optimization and efficient organization. To improve the positioning of the company and its products in the public consciousness, to build and maintain a rapport with both existing and potential customers and shareholders, to enhance competitiveness, to gain a good reputation and to increase profits, companies need to create a positive corporate image and establish effective communication and information processes, which requires a more detailed analysis of communication in the sphere of corporate imagemaking.

The problem of genre stratification of various discourse types has repeatedly attracted the attention of scholars working in the fields of functional stylistics and linguistics. This interest indicates that certain types of discourse have already been sufficiently shaped, since any discourse exists within genres and manifests itself through them, and the investigation of such discourses has reached the stage of knowledge generalization. We consider the present-day English corporate imagemaking discourse to be on the abovementioned stage, which requires the study of its genre system.

Literature review. Linguistic genealogy was initiated by an outstanding philospher and literary critic M. Bakhtin [2], who developed a universal theory of speech genres, the cornerstone of which is utterance as a single real unit of communication. In his essay The Problem of Speech Genres the scholar defines genres as “relatively stable thematic, compositional and stylistic types of utterances” [2, p. 241-242]. The researcher stresses the inexhaustible diversity of speech genres caused by the richness and variability of the forms of social life.

An important place in genre studies is occupied by the sociorhetorical concept of genre formulated by John Swales in his book Genre Analysis [7]. His vision of genre as a communicative event, a means of achieving the communicative purpose which belongs to the parent discourse community, is one of the most recognized in linguistics. Following M. Bakhtin, the scholar points out that communicative purpose is a privileged criterion for genre identification and classification and thus acknowledges the existence of the rich amount of genres that function in various spheres of human life.

The theoretical framework of present-day Ukrainian genre analysis has been set by F.S. Batsevych [3; 4]. The scholar defines speech genres as thematically, stylistically and compositionally established types of utterances – vehicles of speech acts – united by the communicative purpose and the speaker’s intention with due regard for the recipient, the context and the communicative situation [3, p. 177]. As F.S. Batsevych emphasises, the illocutionary force of speech acts is subjected to the addressee’s strategy and tactic [3, p. 342].

An important contribution to linguistic genealogy has been made by T.V. Yakhontova, who treats genres as complex phenomena with three interrelated dimensions: socio-communicative, sociocognitive and linguistic [8, p. 73]. The main characteristics of genres are integrity, completeness, internal dynamism, adaptability and the tendency to make “inter-genre” connections [8, p. 110]. According to the researcher, genres do not exist in isolation; they always overlap and interact in the communicative process, T.V. Yakhontova has elaborated an eight-stage analytical model of genre analysis, which considers all multi-level genre characteristics. The procedure of complex genre analysis starts with clarifying contextual factors of genre functioning, further focusing on genre substrates and communication channels, principles of corpus selection, formal structure of texts and their spatial localization, cognitive structuring of texts in terms of functional units and rhetorical strategies, and identifying genre elements and linguistic features; then a reverse analysis is performed aimed at verifying the obtained results and contrasting several corpora in order to reveal intergeneric differences and similarities. The researcher has also developed a “genre portrait”, or a genreogram, for generalizing the most important genre parameters obtained during the analysis [9, p. 13–14].

Objective. The present study is aimed at analyzing the genre system of the English corporate imagemaking discourse and revealing the prominent features of image genres.
Methods. The object of the research is the system of genres of the present-day English corporate imagemaking discourse. The methodology used in the study is based on the general scientific methods of induction and deduction, analysis and synthesis as well as on the procedure of genre analysis.

Results and Discussion. The basis for the classification of image genres within the English corporate imagemaking discourse is the system of PR-genres developed by A.V. Aksenova and T.V. Anisimova [1]. Taking into consideration the nature of the recipient and the means of implementing image function, genres in the above-mentioned discourse can be classified into three groups.

1. Traditional PR-genres which have become the focus of research interests of scientists working in the fields of genre studies and text linguistics. O.D. Kryvonosov [5] proposed a typology of PR-texts according to their “readiness” for publication. They are divided into basic and related that do not correspond to all the features of a PR-text (slogan, resume, press review). Among basic PR-texts there are primary and media texts with sufficiently well-marked characteristics of a PR-text (article, image interview, case study). Primary PR-texts are subdivided into simple (press release, backgrounder, factsheet, biography, byliner, greeting, invitation, statement to the media) and combined (newsletter, press kit, booklet, brochure).

PR-text is defined as a simple or combined text initiated by the basic PR-subject, which contains PR-information, functions in the space of public communications, serves the purposes of forming or increasing the publicity capital of the basic PR-subject, is addressed to a particular segment of the public, has a hidden authorship and is distributed by mail, personal delivery or through the media [5]. The main functions of a PR-text genre are informative, communicative and the function of influence which lies in the formation of the positive attitude of the target audience to the PR-subject [6].

Since the main objective of PR-genres, which consists in the formation of the image capital of a company or an individual, coincides with the objective of the studied discourse, they appear to be image genres.

2. PR-genres that are not used by journalists and function outside the media. They include genres belonging to institutional oral communication. The specific characteristics of these genres is that they are directly addressed to the target audience of a certain imagemaking event with the aim of increasing publicity capital of the subject (presentations and receptions, forums and conventions, open days, seminars and conferences, corporate events and anniversaries, exhibitions, contests and competitions).

In addition, this group includes genres that function on the Internet where each company has its official website and posts materials, most of which have an image potential [1, p. 22].

3. Genres with an indirect image strategy. These genres are aimed at producing a perlocutionary effect and a predictable reaction of the recipient. This category includes genres of the related discourse types, which have an image potential. Almost any genre, if properly oriented and structured, can become an image genre and enlarge this group [1, p. 21-22].

Such image genres contain additional information about the benefits of a company that do not contribute to the accomplishment of the main genre objective, but are aimed at evoking a predictable psychological reaction of the recipient and at changing his/her thoughts about the initiator of communication [1, p. 22]. Moreover, image-related aspects of these texts should serve interests of the target audience in order to programme its response.

This group of genres includes [1, p. 21]:

- newspaper genres (article, correspondence, reportage, commentary, review, report, questionnaire, survey, etc);
- television genres (video, conversation, interview, discussion, debate, press conference, talk show, etc);
- oratorical genres (business speech, propaganda speech, anniversary speech, welcome speech, announcement, etc).

Conclusions. The conducted research of genre stratification of the English corporate imagemaking discourse has allowed us to distinguish three groups of genres united by a single purpose of creating a positive corporate image of a business company. The characteristic feature of this genre system is that it covers related discourse types and their genres, since any genre can be an image genre if it meets specific requirements and contributes to forming a positive opinion of the initiator of communication. The typological characteristics of image genres are their artificial nature, the orientation at the values and interests of the communication participants and the responsibility of the author of the text before the company and consumers of its product.

REFERENCES


