Construing Experience:
Some Story Genres

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FIRST CONTACT

As far as we can recall, we first drew on Labov and Waletzky (1967/this issue; henceforth L&W) in the late 1970s when we were beginning to develop genre theory within the general framework of systemic functional linguistics (SFL). Our main sources for thinking about generic structure at the time were Mitchell (1957/1975), the classic Firthian study of buying and selling in a Moroccan marketplace, and Hasan (1977), a seminal SFL paper that focussed on appointment making. Our aim was to develop a social model of genre that generalized across these and other text types (Christie & Martin, 1997; Eggins & Martin, 1997; Martin, 1985/1989, 1992; Ventola, 1987), and we appreciated having L&W’s work to draw on.

Over the years, their work had a continuing influence on the development of this model, especially with respect to two strands of the research. One strand was community based and oriented to mapping the repertoire of genres through which people enact their lives. Plum (1988, in press) in particular was intrigued by the possibility of developing a sociolinguistic interview that was specifically designed to “elicit” genres, including narratives. The other strand was school based (Rothery, 1990) and concerned with mapping the repertoire of genres used by students to succeed in school and to redistribute control of these to students who were not accessing them (Hasan & Williams, 1985/1996; Martin, 1993). Here we were concerned with deconstructing the kinds of narrative students were expected to write and critique (Rothery & Macken, 1991). In both strands, the role of evaluation, flagged by L&W as construing the point of narrative, became more and more crucial.

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Stories in the Community

Continued Experience
I was ready to go, so I said to my friend:

"Let's go in the morning, and we'll see how far we can go.""
We also discovered that primary school teachers were predominantly female.

Section II

English is the main subject of instruction, and students are required to take at least four subjects, including English. However, the majority of the students are from lower socio-economic backgrounds and face challenges in learning and understanding the material presented in class.

Stories in School

Marvin and Jane

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REFERENCES


