Multimodal Genre and Cross-Linguistic Comparison: Pack Messages

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This paper shows that the multimodal messages on fast moving consumer goods packaging constitute a genre of text. More specifically, they may be seen as a form of colony discourse (Hoey 2001). It is shown that the contribution that multimodal resources make across whole texts and the social nature of genre recognition and instantiation make genre a useful way to approach the cross-linguistic comparison of pack messages. The paper presents a critical discussion of influential linguistic accounts of genre and shows that these might be usefully extended in order to accommodate multimodal texts by incorporating insights from typographic research. The paper ends by presenting a new synthesis of these various approaches to genre which will provide the framework for ongoing empirical analysis.

Keywords: genre, linguistics, localisation, multimodality, typography

1 Background and aims

The background to the present paper is a wider research agenda, the aim of which is to build a model of variation across the messages that appear on fast-moving consumer goods packaging from three markets, or LOCALES: China, Taiwan and the UK. This model should highlight what needs to be considered when LOCALISING existing PACK MESSAGES, that is adapting them for a new locale. As such, I am interested in the relationship between parallel examples, such as those shown in Figure 1. However, I also seek to make generalizations about specific properties of pack messages from a given locale. In order to provide data for the model, I have designed a multimodal comparable corpus of pack messages, in which the pack is taken as the basic unit of comparison. I have described the design of the corpus elsewhere (Thomas 2007). Suffice to say here that each face of each pack is numbered according to a conventional pattern.[1] Then details of the linguistic content and typographic realization of every message on each face are recorded, as are the rhetorical relations into which each message enters.

In the present paper, I will show why genre is relevant to such comparative analysis. I will compare influential approaches to genre from linguistics and relate these to examples from my corpus of pack messages. It will also be shown that these linguistic approaches might usefully be extended in order to accom-

[1] In most of the examples presented in this paper, the packs are cuboid boxes with faces numbered from 1 to 6, where 1 is the front of the pack and 3 is the back.

Figure 1: Head & Shoulders, UK and Taiwan packs, face 1

modate multimodal texts by incorporating insights from typographic research. The paper ends by presenting a new synthesis of these various approaches to genre which will provide the framework for ongoing empirical analysis.

2 The pack as colony text

I take each pack as a text: through the messages by which it is realized, it 'functions as a unity with respect to its environment' (Halliday & Hasan 1976, p.2). Moreover, pack messages are multimodal. While they communicate through what Twyman (1985) calls the visual channel, pack messages are realized using a combination of three modes (verbal, schematic, pictorial). Moreover, as can be seen in Figure 1, the verbal components of visual messages are modulated and segmented through typography (Waller 1987). However, this characterization is not sufficiently specific: it can be argued that the majority of printed texts could be thus described.

Building as it does on Halliday & Hasan's description of what distinguishes a text, Hoey's (2001) concept of the colony might be used to highlight some

Figure 2: Sensodyne on display in a supermarket in Taiwan

more specific features of pack messages that are particularly relevant to their consideration as a genre. Hoey offers the following working definition: “a colony is a discourse whose component parts do not derive their meaning from the sequence in which they are placed” (2001, p.75). This seems particularly apt in our case. It is problematic to determine the sequence of elements on each face of a pack, which suggests that the messages do not derive their meaning from it. Moreover, while the sequence in which the faces themselves should be presented is not arbitrary (by convention different messages are found on the front to the ones found on the back), the control exercised by the author over the presentation of this sequence is limited. Even on the supermarket shelf, perhaps the primary “context of situation” (Halliday & Hasan 1976, p.21) in which packs are encountered as texts, and one in which authorial control is relatively strong, the consumer is not always presented with the front of the pack (see Figure 2). Finally, in this connection, it should also be noted that Hoey himself allows that sequence may be significant “to the extent that emphasis is part of meaning” (2001, p.77).

Aside from the sequentiality which is central to his definition, Hoey identifies a number of other properties of the colony (2001, pp.77–87). These too seem

apt in the case of pack messages. Firstly, he notes that the colony needs a "framing context [to] provide conditions for the interpretation of the colony or alternatively provide a characterisation of the colony" (p.79). In our case, the framing context is concretely realized in the form of the pack. Secondly, he goes on to note that a colony "either usually has no named writer, the author being some organisation such as British Telecom or Merseyrail, or else has multiple authors who are responsible for the components of the text but not for the whole" (p.81). This is certainly true of pack messages. While parts of the text may have been written by a copy editor, who remains unidentifiable to the reader, other parts, such as the ingredients list, may have been supplied by others members of the product development team and others still, such as health warnings, may be required by law. In the latter case, even the corporate author, the brand owner, does not control the whole text. Moreover, it is likely that other professionals will be responsible for the typographic expression or realization of most, if not all, of the messages. It is quite possible that verbal text supplied by a copy editor is altered by a graphic designer to fit given confines of space. The next three properties proposed by Hoey are closely related to each other. He explains that a component of the colony may be used without reference to other components, that components from one colony may join another, and that components of a colony may be added, removed or altered without changes to the surrounding text (pp.82–83). If we consider the examples in Figures 1 and 3, we see that while many equivalent components are present on both Taiwanese and UK versions of the pack, some, such as the bright green aloe vera illustration, are present on only one of them.

Figures 4 and 5 each show three faces of a UK pack design which has undergone revision. While the fronts of the two packs may look very similar, this is largely due to the use of very similar graphic resources, such as placing, colour and typeface. In fact, the fronts of the two packs share very few identical verbal messages. Indeed, as the name of the product variety has changed (from "Advanced Whitening and Stain Prevention" to "Advanced White with Micro-Cleansing Crystals"), it could be argued that the two packs are not revisions of the same text, but two different texts.

However, if we compare faces 2 and 3 of each pack, in which more detail is given about the product, we see that they contain a very similar set of verbal messages, expressed using very similar graphic resources. Without seeking to provide an exhaustive account of the changes that have been made to this colony, it is useful to point to some specifics which relate directly to Hoey's colony. First of all, the placing and therefore the sequence of most of the components has been changed. In fact, apart from the left-hand column, all messages that were on face 2 on the original version have been moved to face 3 on the revised version and vice versa. One might speculate that this was done in order to make better use of the available space on the two faces. On the revised pack, the whole of the larger face 3 is given to claims about the effectiveness of the product. In relation to this, we see that the barcode has been rotated 90 degrees when moved to the

Figure 3: Head & Shoulders, UK and Taiwan packs, face 3

narrower face 2.[2] A pictorial component of the colony, the image of a mouth shown on the left of face 3 of the original pack has been removed from the revised version. Given that a copy of the same image has now been moved to face 3 from face 2, this deletion might have been made in order to reduce unwanted duplication. The revised pack also features the insertion of an additional bullet point in the left-hand column on face 3: “Effectively Removes Stains”. The final bullet point has also been rewritten: originally it was “Fights plaque & cavities”; on the revised pack it has become “Fights Cavities and Removes Plaque”. The fact that title case is used to express the verbal messages in these two bullet points on the revised pack, rather than the sentence case used for the first two (which are identical to those on the original pack) adds further circumstantial weight to the claim that the text is a revision.

Presumably the brand owner thought that the revised design was somehow an improvement on the original. In any case, this example certainly suggests that the meaning of pack messages is not primarily dependent on sequence and that components of the pack message colony may be moved, added, or removed

[2]Incidentally, the fact that the value of the barcode remains constant adds further weight to the claim that this is a revision, rather than being an altogether new text.

Figure 4: Colgate Advanced Whitening, UK pack, faces 1, 2 and 3, purchased in 2006

Figure 5: Colgate Advanced White, UK pack, faces 1, 2 and 3, purchased in 2007

without disrupting the overall function of the colony.

3 Why is genre relevant?

3.1 Text, typography and genre

Baldry & Thibault (2006, p.4) characterize the relationship of text to genre as one of instance to type. As such, genre analysis provides a way of generalising and abstracting away from specific realizations, i.e. texts such as the packs collected in a corpus, towards systems of meaning potential.

Furthermore, linguists explain that genre constraints operate at the discourse level (Swales 1990, p.41) and that genre analysis tends to focus on whole texts (Martin 1992, p.496). Those seeking to extend approaches from linguistics to multimodal analysis have also been keen to locate their work within a tradition of discourse analysis (see e.g. Kress & van Leeuwen 2001, Baldry & Thibault 2006).

Lemke (1998, p.95) offers an insight on the pervasive contribution made by typography. Although he is specifically concerned with printed scientific texts, his observations are relevant to other texts realized in the visual channel:

> Even the linguistic meanings are presented through the visual semiotics of orthography and typography, including all matters of page layout as well as choices of font style and typeface sizes, the use of headings and footers, etc. It is precisely because language here is present through a visual semiotic that it is so readily integrated with other systems of visual meaning.

Thus typography can be seen as making a link, not just between verbal and non-verbal "systems of visual meaning", but also between the various levels, or ranks, at which such systems operate.

In his earlier study, which sets out to make the link between typography and language, Waller suggests that typography should be incorporated into discourse studies (1987, p.68). As his analysis develops, he makes the more specific observations that typographic resources are often used for segmentation, or "the marking of boundaries", "at levels higher than the sentence" and that "at the discourse level [...] typographic modulation is common" (Waller 1987, p.100). He goes on to note, that "textbook designers, for example, often specify different typographic 'voices' to distinguish between, say, the main text, quotations, captions and study guidance."

Given that typography necessarily depends among other things on the resources of the particular writing system used by the language of the text (see, for example, Bringhurst 2002), it is likely to be a particularly fruitful place to look for cross-linguistic variation.

3.2 Culture, function and translation

In addition to shedding light on the relationship between text and typography, genre provides a crucial link between text and culture. This link will become clearer as we look in some detail at three important approaches to genre from beyond Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL): Biber (1988), Swales (1990) and Waller (1987). For his part, Halliday explains that "the generic structure is

outside the linguistic system; it is language as the projection of a higher-level semiotic structure" (1978, p.134). This seems to point to the relationship between genre and culture. However, he goes on to say that "generic structure can be brought within the general framework of the concept of register, the semantic patterning that is characteristically associated with the 'context of situation' of a text." As we shall see in the next section, other theorists from within the SFL tradition, have put it slightly differently, explicitly identifying genre with the "context of culture" (see, for example, Martin 1992, p.495).

While there has been little work in Translation Studies on the genre of pack messages, it is interesting to note that Hatim & Munday (2004, p.24) refer to types of texts which draw heavily on multimodal resources when introducing "higher units of translation". In relation to these "higher units", they also place special emphasis on the function of the target text:

> a translated piece of software must work perfectly on-screen and enable the user to perform the desired action; advertisements, most particularly, and poetry need to be translated at the level of the text (or even culture) and not the word if their message is to function in the target culture; and medicines and other foodstuffs must carry instructions and warning notices that satisfactorily alert the TT reader to possible dangers.

Given the cross-cultural context of the present project, this social aspect to genre is particularly significant. Moreover, given the contributions that typography makes to discourse, at which level genre constraints are said to operate, and also the status of the text, or pack, as my basic unit of comparison, developing an understanding of genre would seem to be essential as the basis for my proposed model of cross-locale variation of pack messages.

4 Linguistic approaches

Martin (1992) describes the relation of genre to register and, in turn, of register to text within an SFL framework. In Martin's terms, register functions as the "expression form of genre", language functions as the "expression form of register" (1992, p.495). Elsewhere, he explains that "register is a pattern of linguistic choices, and genre a pattern of register choices (i.e. a pattern of a pattern of texture)" (2002, p.57). One significant consequence of this rather abstract treatment of genre is that Martin sees genre as a "level of semiosis which is not itself metafunctionally organised" which means that "texts can be classified in ways that cut across metafunctional components in language" (1992, p.505). While such descriptions explain how genre (and register) relate to language (lexicogrammar) via stratification within the architecture of SFL, it would seem useful to supplement them with other definitions, which are more tangible, yet to a large extent compatible.

In their discussion of multimodal genre, Bateman, Delin & Henschel (2006, p.151) note that Swales' definition "has become almost standard and is often

cited". Swales develops his definition of genre in a rather lengthy discussion (1990, pp.45–58), at the end of which he provides the following summary:

> A genre comprises a set of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style. Communicative purpose is both a privileged criterion and one that operates to keep the scope of a genre as here conceived narrowly focused on comparable rhetorical action. In addition to purpose, exemplars of a genre exhibit various patterns of similarity in terms of structure, style, content and intended audience. If all high probability expectations are realized, the exemplar will be viewed as prototypical by the parent discourse community. The genre names inherited and produced by discourse communities and imported by others constitute valuable ethnographic communication, but typically need further validation.

Although not specified by this summary, in which he refers simply to "communicative events", it is worth noting that Swales explicitly discounts "all uses of the term to refer to non-verbal objects" (1990, p.33). He later specifies that:

> Activities in which talk is incidental, as in engaging in physical exercise, doing the household chores, or driving, will not be considered as communicative events; nor will activities that involve the eyes and ears in non-verbal ways such as looking at pictures or listening to music (1990, pp.45–46)

Thus, in Swales' terms, shopping does not qualify as a communicative event. Moreover, if we isolate reading pack messages as an event within the activity of shopping, their multimodal nature would seem to involve the eyes "in non-verbal ways". However, despite such exclusions, we shall see that Swales' account of genre has much to offer. After all, he intended "to create a sufficiently adequate characterization for others to be able to use, modify or reject as they think fit" (1990, p.45).

Clearly the primary criterion for genre membership according to Swales is the shared "set of communicative purposes". It is also worth recalling that Martin sees merit in associating "rhetorical purpose" directly with genre, rather than attempting to locate it within some other category of contextual description as other functional linguists have done (1992, p.501).

Biber has made significant contributions to the literature on genre, register and text variation (e.g. Biber 1988, Biber & Finegan 1991, Biber 1995). He has remarked on the difficulty of distinguishing "the empirical correlates" of genre and register as "supposedly discrete categories" (1995, p.9). Indeed, he has used the same definition to cover both terms in different publications (Biber & Finegan 1991, Biber 1995).

In an earlier book, he provides a brief definition of genre categories (1988, p.170):

> Genre categories are determined on the basis of external criteria relating to the speaker's purpose and topic; they are assigned on the basis of use rather than on the basis of form.

In a later work by Biber & Finegan (1991, p.213), we find a further, complementary observation:

> Genres are the text categories readily distinguished by mature speakers of English (e.g. novels, newspaper articles, public speeches).[3]

Although such pithy descriptions have been labelled "rather non-technical" (Teich 2003, p.23)[4], like Swales' account they have proved influential and, more importantly, the accompanying analyses offer useful insights.

Though their formulations vary, Biber and Swales agree on several core properties of genre. Moreover, similar points are found elsewhere in the literature. Now let us turn to a closer examination of these core properties.

4.1 Genre is defined externally

As we have seen, Biber has used the same definition for both GENRE (Biber & Finegan 1991, p.213) and REGISTER (Biber 1995, p.132). However, he consistently draws a distinction between these two concepts on the one hand and TEXT TYPE on the other: "text types represent groupings of texts that are similar in their linguistic form, irrespective of genre" (Biber 1988, p.170). In their later study, Biber & Finegan explain that text types "have a strictly linguistic basis; they are sets or groupings of texts such that the texts within each are linguistically similar while the sets are linguistically distinct." (Biber & Finegan 1991, p.213).

Citing Couture, Swales distinguishes genre from register, thus: "Registers impose constraints at the linguistic levels of vocabulary and syntax, whereas genre constraints operate at the level of discourse structure" (1990, p.41). Moreover, in relation to genre, Swales concedes a secondary role to aspects of formal similarity. As we saw in his summary definition, Swales refers to "patterns of similarity". In the preceding discussion, having noted that "communicative purpose has been nominated as the privileged property of a genre", he then explains that: "other properties, such as form, structure and audience expectations operate to identify the extent to which an exemplar is prototypical of a particular genre" (1990, p.52).

Although they use the same terms differently, Biber and Swales seem to draw the line between genre and other categories in a similar place. Moreover, this would seem to correspond with Halliday's point that "the generic structure is outside the linguistic system". However, when we consider the other types of

[3] Note that Biber (1995, p.132) later re-used the same definition for REGISTER.

[4] Teich makes her point in relation to Biber's subsequent (1995) re-use of the same definition to define REGISTER.

categories to which they refer, Biber's and Swales' taxonomies fail to correspond: while it may be tempting to see Swales' notion of REGISTER as similar to Biber's notion of TEXT TYPE, we should not forget the different levels of analysis at which these categories operate, i.e. "vocabulary and syntax" for the former and "text" for the latter.

4.2 Genre classifications depend on communicative purpose

Biber explicitly relates genre with purpose in his (1988) definition, though he also accords significance to the speaker's topic. Indeed, Biber's discussion of relations among sub-genres (1988, pp.180–191) suggests that some are assigned primarily on the basis of topic (within press reportage, he identifies political, sports, society, spot news, financial, cultural), while others are assigned on the basis of participants (as sub-types of editorials, he identifies institutional editorials, personal editorials, letters to the editor). Insofar as it can be separated from communicative purpose, this suggests an interpersonal aspect to genre classification.

For his part, Swales is also explicit about purpose: "The principal criterial feature that turns a collection of communicative events into a genre is some shared set of communicative purposes" (1990, p.46). As is typical of his considered approach, he notes that conflict is possible among sets of purposes (1990, p.47). He is also much more circumspect than Biber about the significance of topic. While his emphasis on discourse community suggests implicit limits on the topics treated within a genre, he explains that (1990, p.25):

> It is commonality of goal, not shared object of study that is criterial, even if the former often subsumes the latter. But not always. The fact that the shared object of study is, say, the Vatican, does not imply that students of the Vatican in history departments, the Kremlin, dioceses, birth control agencies and liberation theology seminaries form a discourse community.

Figure 6: Colgate Total, UK pack, face 1

Now let us consider some examples of pack messages in the light of these criteria (see Figures 6 and 7). It would seem that we rely on a combination of external and internal features to recognize the genre. Undoubtedly, the two examples share a common purpose: to sell a particular type of toothpaste. In the case of the Sensodyne example, there seems also to be a secondary purpose:

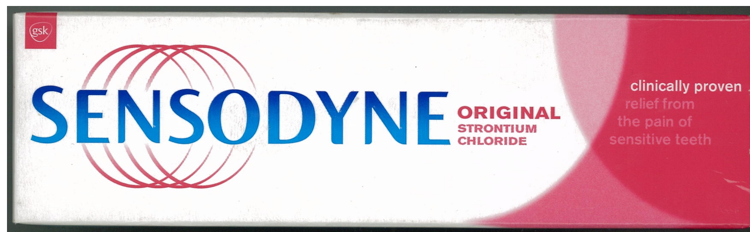

Figure 7: Sensodyne Original, UK pack, face 1

recognition of the parent brand might be increased by placing the GSK logo on the front. While the packs employ different linguistic and graphic resources to do achieve their aims, they also seem to exhibit Swales' "patterns of similarity" in terms of the typographic realization of the messages: on the pack fronts in Figures 6 and 7, as well as those in Figures 1 and 2, the brand name is placed prominently in a central position and in a relatively large font.

Figure 8: Colgate Total, UK pack, face 2

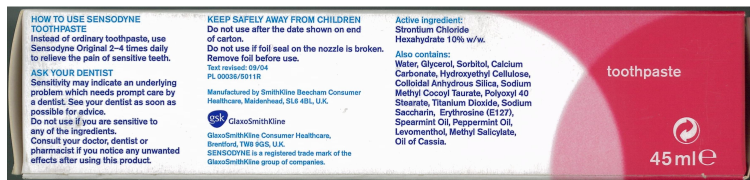

Figure 9: Sensodyne Original, UK pack, face 2

Turning the toothpaste packs over (see Figures 8 and 9), in both cases we see that graphic features have been carried over from the front of the pack onto its side face, thus building visual cohesion across each text (for a discussion of multimodal texture and cohesion, see Thomas in press). In relation to genre, it is perhaps more interesting that both packs share formal features of layout, such as columnar organization of information, though this may be due to the common constraints placed on the texts by the properties of the boxes which carry the messages. They also differ: on this face, the Sensodyne pack does not feature the brand name as prominently as the Colgate pack.

The side faces of the packs perform a richer range of communicative purposes than do the fronts and this range of functions is shared in both examples. Both

packs carry messages which aim to persuade the consumer to buy the product. Arguably this function is more salient in the Colgate example. However, both packs also carry instructions about how to use and store the product, advice about what to do in case of problems, information about ingredients and contact details for the manufacturer.

In all, these two packs seem to fit with Swales' and Biber's account of genre: they share a set of common communicative purposes. To a lesser degree, they also exhibit similar formal qualities thus corresponding with Swales' "patterns of similarity".

4.3 Genres are recognized by members of a language community

As we have seen, the cultural basis for genre recognition is central to Biber & Finegan's (1991) definition. In addition to the references to "discourse community" in his own definition, Swales (1990, pp.52–53) makes a similar, if rather more nuanced, point:

> Established members of discourse communities employ genres to realize communicatively the goals of their communities. The shared set of purposes of a genre are thus recognized — at some level of consciousness — by the established members of the parent discourse community; they may be only partly recognized by apprentice members; and they may be either recognized or unrecognized by non-members.

Swales differs from Biber & Finegan (1991) in two significant ways. Firstly, he focuses on the "purposes of a genre", rather than on "the genre" itself. This seems to be in keeping with his insistence that communicative purpose is the privileged criterion for genre recognition. Secondly, he is much more circumspect about the respective abilities of different classes of member (and non-member) of a given discourse community to recognize these purposes.

As we saw in Figure 2, the supermarket shelf offers a rather special context of situation — many members of the genre are seen alongside each other and, typically, only part of each text, usually the front face, is immediately available for reading. However, we would probably recognize the genre to which such a text belonged if we encountered it in other situations, even if it appeared in isolation. Moreover, given visual cues, we would probably be able to do this even if we were not familiar with a particular brand and could not read the language used to realize its messages. On the other hand, we would not expect most supermarket shoppers to be able to instantiate the genre of toothpaste packs adequately.

4.4 Genres are not equally homogeneous

Biber notes that: "Genres are not equally coherent in their linguistic characterisations. Some genres have several sub-classes which are quite different from one another" (1988, p.170). Moreover, he goes on to report that texts from some genres obtained a wider range of scores across his six dimensions of variation than did those from other genres (1988, pp.178–179).

Figure 10: Display of RTD tea in a Taiwanese convenience store

Swales (1990, p.49) also makes this point explicitly: “Exemplars or instances of genres vary in their prototypicality”. We should bear in mind that his definition links prototypicality with patterns of formal similarity. He goes on to explore various approaches to categorization and finds that this phenomenon is not limited to genres. Membership of definitional categories does not imply equal status: “Some [birds] are ‘birdier’ than others” (1990, pp.51–52). Moreover, perceptions of category membership and prototypicality appear to be culturally specific. For example, he cites a study showing that, within US culture, apples and plums are considered “typical” fruits, whereas olives and coconuts are “untypical” (1990, p.52).

Figure 10 shows a number of ready-to-drink (RTD) tea packs. Not only is the principal communicative purpose consistent, but its realization is remarkably stable across the brands and flavours on offer. Close inspection also reveals that, in many cases, the topic of discourse is signalled prominently by an image of a tea leaf. By contrast, the toothpaste display shown in Figure 11 shows a genre which is rather less homogeneous, at least in terms of form. Not only are the resources used to realize the messages much more varied, the packs themselves, which conform to very similar dimensions, are displayed in different orientations.

Figure 11: Display of toothpaste in a Taiwanese supermarket

4.5 Cross-linguistic genre comparison is feasible

As was mentioned in the introduction, I intend to use genre as a way of approaching cross-linguistic variation in pack messages. It is therefore heartening to find that both Biber and Swales suggest that cross-linguistic comparison of members of a genre is feasible, though Swales expresses a characteristic note of caution.

Biber has published his own attempts to apply his multi-dimensional approach to variation cross-linguistically and has suggested reasons why such studies are not only possible, but necessary (1995, pp.22-23). Meanwhile, Swales (1990, p.65) points out that: "Comparison of languages is notoriously difficult, especially at the discoursal level [...] Among [other] caveats it is important to compare texts of the same genre in two languages." A very similar point is made, albeit with rather more positive emphasis, by Teich (2003, p.4), who notes that, if two texts in two languages are "used in similar situational contexts in which they fulfil comparable functions, then these two texts can be compared across the two languages." In these terms, genre membership would seem to be an important criterion for the selection of valid comparators. At the same time, we should however bear in mind Swales' observation that perceptions of category membership are culturally specific. Finally, in terms of the comparison of packs, I would add two commercial considerations: the degree of success of the products and the degree to which the brands are established in the local market.

In summary, in the light of these linguistic accounts, it seems that packs from a common product category can be considered as members of a genre.

Moreover, they suggest that it is valid to compare packs across cultures.

We shall now turn to the relationship between genre and multimodality. As we shall see, much of the common ground shared by the linguistic accounts is also shared by multimodal approaches to genre. However, these are complemented by insights that are of particular value in relation to the comparative analysis of pack messages that I propose to undertake.

5 Multimodal approaches

5.1 SFL-based approaches

Given their preoccupation with language, it is perhaps not surprising that the definitions offered by Biber or Swales do not account for certain features of multimodal texts which contribute to the formation of their genres. In particular, Swales is quite clear that, in his attempt to pin down the "slippery" concept of genre, he deliberately excludes "non-verbal objects" from consideration (1990, p.33).

Unfortunately, the SFL-based literature on multimodal analysis seems to lack an adequate definition of genre. Although hugely influential, Kress & van Leeuwen (1996) do not directly address genre in any detail and they provide no definition. Neither is a definition offered by other pioneering work, such as Bernhardt (1985), O'Toole (1994) or Lemke (1998). Having openly acknowledged their debt to Bakhtin, Baldry & Thibault (2006, p.43) offer the following:

> Generic forms are the standardised discourse formats and text-types which language users use and adapt to specific speech situations in order to give determinate social shape to their discourse. Genres are the typical forms of discourse that are used according to the speech situation. Different social situation-types require different generic forms according to the purposes of the interactants, their social relations with each other and the social activity in which they are engaged. Genres are stable, yet plastic, forms of discourse which can be adopted/adapted in both standardised and creative ways to particular situations and their contingencies.

In turn Bakhtin, quoted in Martin (1992, p.495), refers to speech genres as "relatively stable types" of utterances. As we shall see, others have put this the other ways around: emphasizing the dynamic aspect of genre.

Such definitions echo the functional and social aspects we have identified in the work of Biber and Swales, but fail to address any of the specific consequences of the multimodal nature of the material under analysis. Though Lemke (1998, p.111) does not provide a definition of genre, he does suggest that genres vary in the degree of their multimodality:

> We must now consider that meaning-in-use normally organises, orients, and presents, directly or implicitly, through the resources of multiple semiotic systems. What the logocentrism of a few prominent

genres of purely verbal text (e.g. unillustrated novels, academic articles in philosophy and the humanities) has distracted us from, perhaps the pervasive multimodal disposition of scientific and technical text can remind us of.

It might be noted that even the most "logocentric" genres (e.g. the unillustrated novel) rely on typographic resources and conventions for organization, orientation and presentation. More particularly, we have already seen that pack messages also include other graphic devices, such as images, logos and icons, all of which make their contribution to communication.

5.2 Insights from typography

While his focus is the relationship between typography and language, Waller (1987) offers a particularly comprehensive account of genre. Although his account precedes the publication of both Biber (1988) and Swales (1990), he is very much concerned with what Lemke has since called "meaning-in-use", and also with what we might call "meaning-in-the-making", that is, the context in which communications are produced.

Waller does not offer a discrete definition of genre that can be reproduced as easily as those of Biber and Swales. His model is complex, consisting of relationships between TOPIC, ARTEFACT and ACCESS STRUCTURES. According to Waller, genres differ because of the different combination of these structures (1987, p.281). This combination gives rise to a fourth structure, the CONVENTIONAL STRUCTURE. Genre conventions function as a design device in their own right, by helping to orientate the user. In turn, they also become a constraint in themselves by suggesting limits to the variety of solutions open to a designer for a given task. In fact, this idea was later echoed by Swales, who talks of "constraining conventions" (1990, p.53). Figure 12 illustrates this relationship, as Waller believes it should ideally function, and situates it within the design process.

Consideration of Waller's model identifies gaps in the purely linguistic approaches to genre discussed so far. It is therefore worth spending some time looking at each of his STRUCTURES in some detail before considering the consequences it has for our understanding of genre. In so doing, I will also incorporate refinements to Waller's model made as part of the GeM project (Delin, Bateman & Allen 2002).

1. Topic structure

   As we might expect, this structure relates to "the topic of the discourse" (Waller 1987, p.178). Waller goes on to explain that, "texts seen as topic structures represent the writer's communication goals organized in the form of arguments, which in turn are expressed at the text surface through verbal language, pictures and typographic layout" (1987, p.194). As such, if we put to one side his more inclusive approach to the modalities of communication, the topic structure, into which "communication goals" are subsumed, seems to correspond fairly well with the linguistic approaches

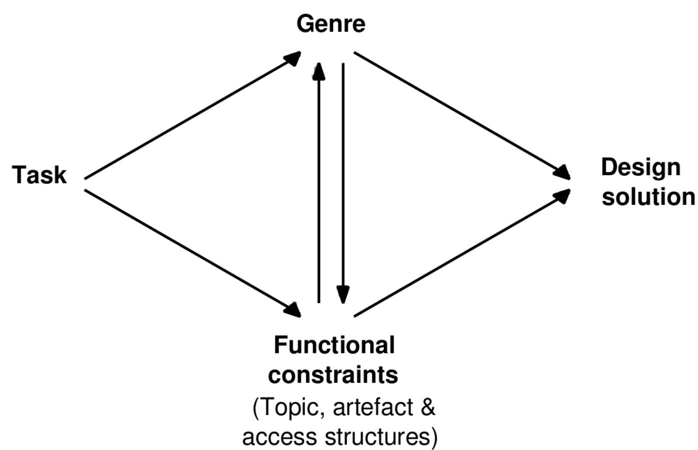

Figure 12: An ideal relationship between genre conventions and functional constraints, in which they are considered in parallel before fixing on a design solution (Waller 1987, p.298). Reproduced with kind permission of the author.

of Biber and Swales.

In describing their revision of the model, Delin et al. (2002, p.56) point out that: "What Waller describes as 'the author's argument' is not solely or completely dictated by content: many rhetorical presentations are compatible with the same content." They therefore make a distinction between CONTENT STRUCTURE and RHETORICAL STRUCTURE.

2. ARTEFACT STRUCTURE

   Waller (1987, p.179) explains that: "Artefact structure represents those features of a typographic display that result from the physical nature of the document or display and its production technology." He goes on to specify that:

   > Since everything typographical or spatial uses an aspect of the artefact as a means of signalling (for example, a heading generally begins on a new line), the term must be restricted in some way if it is to be of use. In the context of this argument, it is intended to cover only those features which are motivated by the artefact alone, or whose 'ideal' form is constrained by the artefact [...] The use of a new page marks the writer's topic boundary and an access point for the reader, but is not constrained by the shape or the size of the page. The amount of blank space remaining at the end of the previous chapter, however, is solely a function of the page size, and is therefore artefactual. Any attempt by the reader to interpret it as topically significant is erroneous.

   Delin et al. (2002, p.56) note that the artefact structure is "not a structure

in the sense that it is a set of ideas to be incorporated into the document, but a constraint on the combination of all the other elements into a finished form." Furthermore, they refine Waller's model by introducing three sets of artefactual constraints (2002, pp.56–57):

- Canvas constraints: "arising out of the physical nature of the object being produced"
- Production constraints: "arising out of the production technology [...] and constraints arising from the micro- and macro-economy of time or materials"
- Consumption constraints: "arising out of the time, place, and manner of acquiring and consuming the document"

Given the particular significance of these constraints for understanding the multimodal genre of pack messages, they will be discussed in more detail in Section 5.2.2.

3. Access structure

   Waller (1987, p.179) explains that the access structure "represents those features that serve to make the document usable by readers and the status of its components clear." In a book, for example, the table of contents and index might be significant elements in the access structure. Similarly, on the label on a can of soup, we might find an indication as to the location of the best before date. Significantly, Waller later explains that: "Access structures, although strictly functional, may nevertheless carry connotations of the genres with which they are most closely associated" (p.258). The location of specific information may be conventionalized to the extent that, rather than looking on the label for the best before date, we go straight to the bottom of the can or the neck of the bottle.

4. Conventional structure

   Waller (1987, p.180) makes it clear that the distinction between the three structures described so far serves an analytical purpose, similar to that afforded by the separation of semiotic modes which in fact make meaning in their combination (Kress & van Leeuwen 1996, Baldry & Thibault 2006, Lemke 1998). Waller describes a fourth category, conventional structure, which describes the management of the combination of the first three. In his words, this fourth structure "amounts to a definition of typographical genres" (1987, p.180).

   Significantly, Waller repeatedly suggests that the conventional structure can become a constraint akin to those belonging to the artefact structure (see, for example, pp.240 and 298) at the same time as performing a constructive role by meeting users' expectations and therefore facilitating their orientation (p.300). Thus there is a relationship between genre and usability which plays a functional role in both design and consumption.

   The relationship between text, genre and expectation is nicely summarized by Delin et al. (2002, p.55):

> A model of document genre [...] must take seriously the suggestion that texts do not only reflect their contexts, but create them, and genre expectations are similarly both reflected and shaped by texts that are instances of those genres.

In this section, we have so far seen that certain features pertaining specifically to multimodal texts should be considered as part of any approach to genre which can accommodate pack messages.

We have already seen that Waller's conception of genre shares with Biber and Swales an emphasis on communicative purpose. In common with another recurring theme in the literature on genre, he also suggests that knowledge of genres is part of linguistic (or, more widely, cultural) competence, going further than Biber or Swales by distinguishing explicitly between the abilities to recognize and produce: "Within their own cultures, readers can develop a tacit knowledge of genres, even if they do not initially have the explicit technical knowledge needed to produce accurate examples themselves" (1987, p.288).

Having outlined his model of genre, now let us turn to three aspects of his approach which are important for any account of multimodal genre in general and for the cross-cultural analysis of pack messages in particular: RULE-BOUNDEDNESS, ARTEFACTUAL CONSTRAINTS and GENRE SHIFT.

5.2.1 Rule-boundedness

As we have seen, Biber and Swales note respectively that genres are not equally coherent (Biber 1988, p.170) and that the texts that belong to genres "vary in their prototypicality" (Swales 1990, p.49). Moreover, Swales spends several pages discussing more general problems associated with various approaches to classification (1990, pp.49–52). His discussion is not limited to textual classifications.

Waller adds the concept of RULE-BOUNDEDNESS which seems particularly applicable to the cross-locale comparison of pack messages. He notes that: "Those genres with a high proportion of essential features are obviously more coherent, more easily recognized and more strictly rule-bound than those with few such features" (1987, p.293). He goes on to present a "scale of rule-boundedness" which is represented in Figure 13.

In relation to rule-boundedness, Waller does not discuss packaging directly, but does comment on advertising. He notes that a series of constraints operate simultaneously from various points on his scale (1987, pp.294–295):

> Certain advertisements have to conform to legal requirements (in particular, cigarette and political advertising), they voluntarily conform to recommended standards [...], they are likely to conform to stereotypes, and they may share the same practical constraints.

As such it would seem likely that some pack sub-genres (i.e. those, such as pharmaceuticals and cigarettes, which are more heavily regulated) will be more homogeneous than others (e.g. confectionery and soap).

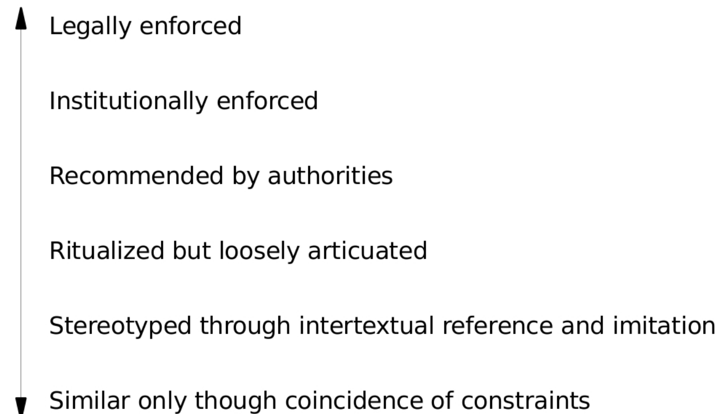

Figure 13: Waller's "scale of rule-boundedness" (1987, p.294).

Moreover, it would seem that some of the types of rule on Waller's scale operate in accordance with a global logic, whereas others apply locally. For example, legal enforcement presumes a jurisdiction whose authority is likely to be limited geographically. Intertextual references again operate locally, perhaps even more so. Newly introduced brands may seek to resemble established brands with which they compete on supermarket shelves in a given market. This reflects Swales's point about the role of audience expectation in relation to prototypicality (1990, p.52). On the other hand, similarity through coincidence of constraints is likely to cross locales. In terms of production constraints, economies of scale promote global consistency across all the markets in which a brand is present. Finally, guidelines designed to preserve the visual equity of a brand may be institutionally enforced or merely recommended. The logic here is likely to vary across brands. Indeed, within a brand there may be tension between the parent brand owner who tends to seek global recognition through consistency and local stake-holders who are in tune with local expectations. In sum, it seems clear that we cannot present a scale of globalism-localism parallel to Waller's scale of rule-boundedness. Though related, the two are independent.

Comparing the fronts of two packs for equivalent products from two markets demonstrates the degree of visual consistency that brand owners can achieve across a brand even when the writing systems used in each locale offer such different typographic resources as Chinese and English (see Figures 14 and 15). The placing, colour and relative size of most key elements, including the brand name and product variety are consistent, though each Chinese character is necessarily larger than each English letter. However, an additional component has

Figure 14: Colgate Sensitive, UK pack, face 1

Figure 15: Colgate Sensitive, Taiwan pack, face 1

been added on the Taiwanese pack: it features an endorsement from the Republic of China Association of Family Dentistry[5] (shown in the bottom left of Figure 15).

To further complicate matters, some components of the pack colony are more rule-bound than others. Let us return the the examples shown in Figures 8 and 9. The brand owners enjoy relative freedom in terms of the way in which they present information about how to use their toothpaste. Indeed, expectations arising from the genre itself, rather than any formal requirement, might account for the ubiquity of this seemingly rather redundant information. Depending on the regulations that are in force where the product is on sale, brand owners may enjoy less freedom in relation to the presentation of lists of ingredients or the volume of content. In such cases, the size, order and unit of measure used to present the information may be prescribed by law.[6]

5.2.2 Artefactual constraints

Printing pack messages involves very large production runs. Moreover, packs must perform a number of functions in a number of situations before being routinely discarded. Because of these factors, the elaborated set of artefactual constraints described in Delin et al.'s (2002) extension of Waller's (1987) model is particularly useful in understanding pack messages as a genre. It is therefore worth discussing each of them in turn. Having done this, it will be argued that ignoring such constraints, as seems to have been done in some SFL-based

[5] 中華民國家庭牙醫學會

[6] It is interesting to note that the Taiwanese Colgate pack shown in Figure 15 carries the weight of the product (in grams) on the front of the pack, while the UK pack shown in Figures 6 and 8 carries the equivalent information on the side of the box (in millilitres). While the unit of measure seems to be consistent across examples from a given market, the placement is not consistent across locale, even for a single brand: some Taiwanese toothpaste packs do not shown the weight of content on the front, while some from the UK do (see Figure 14).

multimodal analysis, would seem to entail certain risks.

In terms of CANVAS CONSTRAINTS, it should be remembered that, while they perform a range of communicative functions, packs are also required to contain a product. As such, they are typically three-dimensional objects, offering a number of faces which may carry messages. Their size is determined to a great extent by the product they contain.

As has been suggested, PRODUCTION CONSTRAINTS are particularly important. The substrate material and the range of colours and effects used in coatings have significant cost implications but may also attract consumers and differentiate products from their competitors. It is interesting to note that, while the two examples shown in Figure 1 are very similar in terms of typographic properties such as layout, colour and typeface, the Taiwanese label features a foil coating and an additional image, which introduces a new colour. In some cases, production constraints may place limits on the areas of a pack that are available for adaptation when packs are localized. One established practice dictates that full colour background printing is shared globally by all versions of a pack, while text over-printed in a single colour within designated windows may be localized.

The CONSUMPTION CONSTRAINTS involved are complicated by the number of potential consumers and situations in which packs are acquired and used. Firstly, while the primary consumer is presumably the shopper who encounters the pack on the supermarket shelf, it must also be read, albeit only in part and perhaps by machine, at the check-out and perhaps at earlier steps in the retail distribution process. Because of this, the text must contain components, such as barcodes, that are not intended for the primary consumer. Moreover, the communicative goals of potential purchasers vary. One shopper might buy the same product every time: in this case, recognition may be all that is required. Someone else may be buying the product for the first time and may seek additional information about its suitability, e.g. for an infant. Secondly, the primary consumer is likely to encounter the pack in at least two very different situations: at the supermarket and at home. As we have seen, on the supermarket shelf, the pack is typically presented alongside identical copies of itself as well as close cousins in the form of product variants and competitors. In this environment, the retailer has a measure of control over the lighting and positioning of the product. In some cases the brand owner may also be in a position to influence this. Once it has been taken home, control over the context in which the pack is read shifts to the consumer. The communicative goals of any subsequent interaction between the consumer and the text may also have shifted. Having been persuaded to buy the product, the consumer may wish to know how to use or store it. At this stage, it is also likely that the pack is simply thrown away.

Given the explicit exclusion of non-verbal material from conceptions of genre developed by linguists such as Swales (1990), it is perhaps not surprising that they have largely neglected such constraints.[7] Although Biber & Finegan (1991, p.218) note that "text types evolve so that their discourse tasks fit the produc-

[7]In fact, Swales (1990, pp.59–60) does show some interest in "situations where 'ordinary' face-to-face conversation is replaced by telecommunication" but he does not take this further.

tion possibilities of their situation", for them "production possibilities" are not constrained by technology, but rather depend upon "situational circumstances". What is more surprising is the lack of attention paid to these constraints by those engaged in developing theoretical tools for multimodal analysis.

It is perhaps significant that the linguistic content of texts can be reproduced for presentation and analysis without significant technical difficulty. On the other hand, as Waller points out in a parenthetical remark, "it is a moot point to what extent one can 'quote' typography without actually reproducing it in facsimile" (1987, p.283). Given this insight from the 1980s, and their avowed intention to move away from "logocentrism" it is perhaps more surprising that more recent work on multimodal analysis has rarely acknowledged constraints arising from the processes of production. And where it does, the description tends to be vague.

In a rare example of a reference to production technologies, Lemke (1998, p.96) notes that:

> Figures, as a typographical component, are regions of the page which are not set in type but produced by some more photographic or direct image-printing process. They include photographs, drawings, diagrams, graphs, and maps. Tables, by contrast, are set in type, and are the most text-like of the non-textual visual presentations.

However, in doing so, he seems less interested in the specifics of production and how these might constrain both design processes and the finished product than in finding a rationale for classifying the "mini-genres" that realize a research article.

In another case, which is perhaps both more typical and more worrying, Baldry & Thibault (2006, pp.34–35) seem to ascribe no explanatory power to the constraints of production technology or publishing schedules, apparently preferring to elevate the genre itself to what seems to be an overly deterministic position: "The use of caricature, the cartoon's main source of comic effect, requires the cartoonist to strip down detail to its bare essentials and exaggerate or deform them in some way." They go on to make what seem to be rather arbitrary comparisons with other artistis genres:

> Cartoonists, particularly those concerned with the printed cartoon, have a much more limited set of resources available than, say, a 15th century artist from Central Italy or a 16th century Dutch portrait painter, where the very nature of the genre means that the artist can faithfully represent the tiniest of meaningful details.

Once again, the genre seems mysteriously to be prescribing the limits of representation, rather than, say, the technologies of production or the expectations of the artists' patrons. Of course, as has already been suggested, Waller himself accords genres a role in the design process — because they are "stereotyped and conventional, they may take on a life of their own and provide a rival source of design constraints" (1987, p.298). However, to ignore artefactual constraints as Baldry and Thibault seem to have done risks jumping to shaky conclusions:

if caricature is conventionally dominant in the genre of cartoons, then it would seem sensible to look at the context in which the technique was developed. It is likely that the reasons for the development of specific techniques derive, in part at least, from practical constraints, such as difficulty in reproducing smooth tonal gradations. As Waller (1999) has pointed out elsewhere, genre conventions and their functional roots are often closely related:

> Although a traditional Bible is designed and chosen (by buyers) almost entirely by reference to genre conventions, these all have completely functional roots that still hold good. Religious books tend to be more intensively used than most, and the leather covers are designed to withstand years of wear. The rounded corners prevent the pages becoming folded over as the corners are knocked, and the gold edges hide finger marks. The thin paper enables the book to remain a usable weight.

Having said this, in the next section, we will see that Waller also emphasizes the fact that genres shift through time. Moreover, these shifts are themselves related to technological developments.

5.2.3 Genres shift through time

The notion that genres change through time is a common thread which runs through the approaches, though again Waller places special emphasis on this aspect of genre in his account. In turn, this is related to the emphasis he places on artefactual constraints.

Biber & Finegan (1991, p.219) refer to "significant differences among written genres from different historical periods with respect to three of the dimensions." Swales refers to conventions which are "constantly evolving" (1990, p.53) and suggests that there exist processes by which "more specific types of interaction" (i.e. genres) evolve from a "pre-generic 'form of life'", such as "ordinary conversation" (p.59), yet he seems not to consider this evolutionary aspect of genre to be sufficiently important to include in his definition. It should also be noted that contemporary linguistic work from both SFL (Martin 1992, p.507) and critical discourse analysis traditions (Fairclough 1992, p.65) has placed emphasis on the dialectical relationship between society and discourse forms, including genre.[8]

Given their interest in new media it is particularly surprising that this aspect of genre is not taken up more enthusiastically by those working on multimodal analysis. In fact, as we saw in their definition, while Baldry & Thibault (2006, p.43) concede that genres are "plastic" they seem to emphasize generic stability, rather than dynamism.

The changing nature of genres is a central feature of Waller's approach. For Waller, it is this property which explains the fuzziness of their categories (1987, p.293). He notes that: "Ordinary-language genre labels are generated in response to real needs felt by communities of text producers and users; they thus have an empirical, perhaps an evolutionary, basis as social realities" (1987,

[8]Both authors ascribe this dynamic to the uneven social distribution of linguistic resources.

p.287). He continues this thought and relates it explicitly to the problems of classification with which other scholars, notably Swales (1990), have grappled:

> their ordinary-language status means that descriptions of genres reflect the full complexity of human interaction rather than the symmetry of a theoretical model. It also means that new genres are constantly being developed as topic, artefact and access structures change, or new combinations are required. Genres are therefore easier to instantiate than classify — easier to recognize in retrospect than to specify in advance. (1987, p.288)

Elsewhere, Delin et al. (2002, p.55) restate this point with perhaps even greater force: "Modelling genres as single entities [...] will not capture their interrelationships, and will always be slightly out of date."

Moreover, Waller (1987, pp.180–181) relates genre shift directly to the impact of technological development on the artefact structure:

> Conventional ways of expressing and accessing topic structures develop within the artefactual constraints of contemporary technologies. When those technologies change, it may be necessary to separate out the three categories of functional imperatives in order to reassemble them to suit the constraints of the new technology.

Given the huge volumes in which pack message are reproduced, their role in selling products and the competitive context in which they function, we would perhaps expect to find especially rapid shifts in this genre. Moreover, given the tendency of genres to shift through time, as well as the cultural dependence of audience expectations mentioned above, we might expect genres such as pack messages to shift through space as well. On the other hand, the role of genre in supporting recognition and the particular significance of visual equity in the branding of products might circumscribe this.

Although pack messages are rather special as a genre, in that many member texts can be seen side by side, it remains difficult to demonstrate genre-level shifts without extensive empirical work of the type planned for the future. However, it is possible to suggest ways in which the formal patterns of similarity, which Swales identifies with prototypicality, might be moving in particular subgenres. For example, while toothpaste has traditionally been sold in boxed tubes, a growing number of other types of toothpaste packaging have been on supermarket shelves in recent years, including plastic bottles and pumps (see Figure 16).

Similarly, we can make some preliminary observations about the differing shape of genres across locales. In Taiwan, as in the UK, Colgate is a major brand of toothpaste. Many varieties of Colgate are available in both locales (see, for example, those packs shown in Figures 14 and 15). However, in some cases, different varieties of the same brand are available in different locales. For example, several flavours of Colgate toothpaste intended for use by children

Figure 16: Display of toothpaste in a Taiwanese department store

are available in Taiwan (see Figure 17)[9], while I have found only one Colgate product for the 2–6 year-old age group on offer in the UK (shown in Figure 18)[10]. While the most obvious formal difference between this pack and other toothpaste packs is that this one is sold as a tube without any outer box, in terms of communicative purpose, it is interesting to note that this pack carries very specific instructions about the use of the product on the back. This includes repeated messages about the intended age of the consumers of the product and several references to "pediatric dentists".

At the beginning of the paper, in relation to colony texts, we saw how individual members of a genre may differ across locales (see Figures 1 and 3) and how they may change across time (see Figures 4 and 5). As a final point it is worth noting that such changes may be uneven across locales. For example, the UK pack design shown in Figure 7 is a refreshed version of an earlier design that was still on sale in Taiwan at the time that both packs were acquired.[11] Figures 19 and 20 show two faces of the Taiwanese pack, the front of which carries a prominent flash advertising the product's new formula.

[9] In terms of intertextual reference, it is interesting to note that a very similar range of three children's varieties are offered by Colgate's main competitor in the Taiwanese market.

[10] There is a similar product for children aged 6 and above.

[11] Both packs were bought in 2006. A subsequent visit to Taiwan in February 2008 confirmed that the old design is still on sale in that locale.

Figure 17: Varieties of Colgate toothpaste for children on sale in Taiwan

6 Conclusion

It has been shown that pack messages are a form of multimodal text. Moreover, they can usefully be seen in terms of Hoey's colony construct (2001). Pack message components do not derive their meaning from sequence, though sequence may contribute to emphasis. The various components of pack messages are produced by multiple authors, none of which can exercise control over the whole text. Components may be added, removed, moved or altered without necessitating changes to the surrounding text.

If we waive exclusions based on the modes of communication, pack messages can be seen as a genre within the terms of important linguistic definitions (Biber 1988, Biber & Finegan 1991, Swales 1990). They share a common set of communicative purposes. They are readily recognized by members of the community. Their recognition and instantiation are social processes. Sub-genres of pack messages are not equally homogeneous. As members of a common genre, the linguistic accounts would seem to agree that pack messages from different locales might be compared as texts.

However, we have seen that purely linguistic accounts of genre require extension in order to accommodate important aspects of multimodal texts in general and pack messages in particular. Such extension needs to go beyond a recognition of the contribution of non-linguistic resources to meaning. The SFL-based literature on multimodal analysis seems to have little to offer in this regard. However, in an early contribution, Waller (1987) develops several very useful concepts. Perhaps most important is his insistence that, owing to their conventional nature, genres can be seen both as a form of design constraint and as an aid to identification and use. Through his concept of artefactual constraints,

Figure 18: Colgate Smiles, UK pack, faces 1 and 3

Figure 19: Sensodyne Original, TW pack, face 1

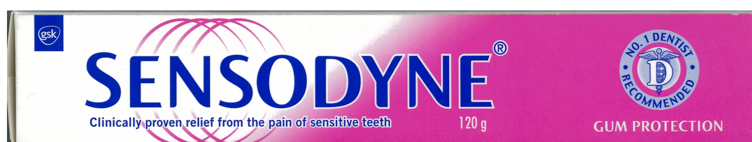

Figure 20: Sensodyne Original, TW pack, face 4

especially in the refined form proposed by Delin et al. (2002), we are able to account for the economic, technological and institutional constraints on text production and to explain the role of these constraints in the recognition and instantiation of multimodal genres. Such constraints make a significant contribution to the "patterns of similarity" which Swales relates to prototypicality (1990, p.58). Moreover, Waller's concept of rule-boundedness offers a useful way of comparing the various components of the pack message colony. It also fits well with the variable homogeneity identified later by Biber and Swales. It has been shown, however, that the scale of rule-boundedness may intersect another scale on which tendencies towards localization or globalization might be plotted. Finally, we have seen that Waller's emphasis on the dynamic nature of genres and their tendency to shift through time is apt. In relation to cross-locale comparison, I would add that genres also take on different forms along the spatial dimension too. This brings us back to Swales' comment that genre membership and prototypicality are culturally-specific (1990, p.52).

On the basis of a critical discussion of relevant theoretical frameworks and a number of illustrative examples, we have seen that genre offers a promising framework for comparative multimodal analysis. However, it will only be possible to make useful generalizations about specific multimodal genres, in specific locales, once sufficient instances of text have been analyzed. As such, the promise offered by the framework developed here may only be realized through substantial empirical research.

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