**Definition :**

The term “genre”… From the French word “genre” (and the Latin word “genus”) meaning “kind, type, sort, category, or class” • Refers to a type or category of communicative or artistic production • Used in artistic fields: film genres, music genres, art genres, literary genres • Used in language to describe any type of written or spoken text.

Language Genres are categories of texts which are determined by a set of parameters : used for a variety of purposes, used in a variety of contexts, can be written or spoken, can be formal or informal

**Categories of Written Texts**

• Narrative: novels, short stories, biographies, autobiographies, historical accounts, plays

• Expository:letters, newsletters, definitions, instructions, guidebooks, catalogs, newspaper articles, magazine articles, pamphlets, essays, reports

 • Persuasive & Discursive: argumentative essays, discussion papers, advertisements, persuasive letters

 • Aesthetic & Wisdom: poems, songs, sayings, proverbs, mottos

 • Technical: research papers, lab reports, medical reports, accident reports, progress reports, directions (to a destination), manuals, evaluation forms, questionnaires, business letters, resumes, presentations, descriptions of features (products/designs/projects), instructions

**The parameters that determine language genres are:**

• Purpose • Audience • Context • Format

**Purpose**: Why a speaker is speaking or a writer is writing – the reason for the text, related to the topic, function, & aim. Examples of PURPOSE include: • To exchange information • To make arrangements • To negotiate a decision • To give instructions • To express feelings • To make a complaint • To express thanks

**Audience**: Who the text is aimed at – target person/group of people (the reader or listener) Examples of AUDIENCE include: • General public, spectators, audience (theater, movie, concert, sport, etc.) • Students, colleagues, friends, family • Visitors to a website (“browsers” or “users”) • Participants in a workshop, presentation • Members of a sports team • Rhetorical audience, an anonymous listener or reader, or yourself

**Context** : Where and when the written text will be read or the speaking is taking place – the time, place, and situation (the setting) Examples of CONTEXT include: • Time period (present, past, or future) • A public place (street, square, park) • At the workplace (factory, office) • In the city, in a village, in the country • On TV, radio, a website, in the newspaper • In a meeting, workshop, or presentation • At an event (wedding, graduation, opening)

**Format** : How it is delivered – what form it will be published or presented in. Examples of FORMAT include:

Spoken: • Direct/face-to-face (conversation, meeting, recital, loud speaker) • Broadcast live on TV or radio • Pre-recorded video (DVD, video files, podcasts)/audio (CD, audio files)

Written: • Handwritten (letter, memo, notes, list) • Printed/“hard copy” (letter, book, magazine, newspaper, journal, document) • Digital/“soft copy” (CD-ROM/flash drive, website, computer files, online chats, scanned documents)

**So, what exactly do the parameters determine?** • In other words, what are the characteristics of a genre?

Characteristics of a Genre The characteristics of a genre can be put into two groups:

 • Text structure • Language features

Note: All texts, whether written or spoken, have text structure and language features. However, FORMAL TEXTS have CONVENTIONAL FORMS – with more established text structures and language features.

**Text Structure** Text organization and form: • Parts or sections of the text • Introduction, body, conclusion • Paragraphs & paragraph structure • Subheadings, subtitles, & summaries • Marginalia & visuals

**Language Features** Wording and style: • Nouns, verbs, linking words • Text markers (discourse markers)

**Does genre awareness help students learn a language better?** • Should genre awareness be included in the ESL/EFL curriculum? • Genre-based learning helps native and non-native learners of English improve as it focuses producing a whole text. • “Studies show that explicit genre-based instruction with the attendant meta-language helps learners improve their writing.” [1] • Genre awareness and text study empower both native and non-native users of English and give them greater language independence.

 **How has technology impacted literacy?** • What does genre awareness mean in the age of computers and the internet?

**Technology & Genres** • What technology has done is bring back “reading and writing as a normal activity for a huge group of peoples.” [2] • Technology means more genres • Technology means a greater need for literacy (e-literacy, information literacy), academic skills, & critical thinking skills .

 • Examples of new technology-based genres: emails, ebooks, blogs, wikis, online chats, podcasts, homepages, menu bars, drop-down menus, online website polls, textboxes, etc.English language skills for a technology-based society – higher level academic reading, writing, and critical thinking skills: • planning & prioritizing • skimming and scanning • identifying purpose, context, & audience of a written/spoken text • using appropriate text structure, language features in writing/speaking • interpreting information – including graphics and marginalia

• evaluating the quality and relevance of information – fact/fiction/opinion, website evaluation • analyzing & synthesizing information • note-taking, summarizing, & paraphrasing • information transfer • develop academic speaking and listening skills – discuss, reason, reflect, hypothesize, speculate, question, clarify, summarize, explain, and interact.