

Analysis of an academic genre

ABSTRACT

This article begins with some reflections on the notion of genre as used in discourse analysis and aims to make a distinction between two types of genre : conversational genres and instituted genres. Varying levels can be distinguished in the range of instituted genres: from genres deprived of any authorship to genres in which a single author partly defines the frame of the communicative event. However, this article deals mainly with a genre-based analysis of an instituted genre, a report on the thesis defence (*soutenance de thèse*) meeting, as practised in French academic institutions. This genre is interesting for discourse analysts, not only because it is closely linked to scientific research communities, but also because it implies an original configuration of authorship and triggers indirect interpretation strategies.

KEY WORDS

academic genre, authorship, discourse genre, discursive community, instituted genre, interpretation

Discourse analysts usually agree on the idea that the notion of genre plays a key role in their discipline. Reflecting upon social events without taking into account the texts - oral or written - that those events make possible (sociological reduction), or reflecting upon texts without taking into account the social events they belong to (linguistic reduction), would mean that discourse is not considered from the viewpoint of discourse analysis. As this notion of discourse genre is usually used to refer to heterogeneous phenomena, this article first examines the difference between *conversational genres* and *instituted genres* before going on to analyse a typical instituted genre: a report on a thesis defence meeting¹ (*soutenance de thèse*), as practised in France. This genre has many interesting properties for discourse analysis, not only because this kind of report is closely related to a sphere which is familiar to scholars, but also because it implies an original configuration of authorship and very interesting strategies of interpretation.

Discourse genres

In discourse analysis, two types of genres are used: (i) those used by ordinary speakers, and (ii) those created by academics. The first type relates to the needs of speakers involved in the production, storage or consumption of certain kinds of texts. (A useful analogy here is that the way booksellers classify books is not the system used by their customers or professors of literature.) The second type, particularly relevant to discourse analysts, is created by academics who apply explicit criteria. However, even in systematic taxonomies there is a wide range of text typologies, and consequently a wide range of typologies of typologies, since the classification criteria may be quite diverse (Petitjean, 1989): for example, linguistic, functional and situational criteria (the circumstances in which speech events take place); and 'discursive' criteria (criteria which combine linguistic, functional or situational features, e.g.

what is known as the ‘popularization’ of science implies specific linguistic proceedings, specific didactic purposes, specific places of production, circulation and consumption of texts).

In French discourse analysis, the category of ‘discourse genre’ (some prefer to use the term ‘text genre’) is defined, as a rule, by situational criteria. The discourse genre thus implies socio-historically constrained communication devices which are always changing and to which metaphors such as ‘contract’, ‘ritual’ and ‘game’ can be easily applied. Although the notion of genre originally came from ancient Greek poetics and rhetoric, this conception of genres is relatively recent. For some decades, particularly under the influence of the ethnography of communication and of Bakhtine’s ideas, the discourse genre has been used for describing the manifold sorts of utterances produced in society. Newspapers, talk shows on TV, transactions in shops, etc. are considered discourse genres; they can be indefinitely diversified, according to the degree of accuracy the discourse analysts are eager to obtain. They are characterized by criteria such as roles, purpose, medium and textual organization. The origin of such models is the well-known ‘S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G.’ model formulated by Hymes (1972).

In order to take this diversity into account, I have previously distinguished three types of genres (Maingueneau, 1999):

1. *Author genres*, which are imposed by the author, sometimes by an editor, with ‘paratextual’ indications such as ‘essay’, ‘meditation’, ‘aphorisms’, etc. Authors claim to define partly, with a one-sided (not negotiated) decision, the frame of their discursive activity. These author genres are mainly present in certain types of discourse: literary or philosophical discourses, of course, but also religious, political or journalistic ones.
2. *Routine genres* are the favourite genres of discourse analysts: newsmagazines, interviews, lectures, business negotiations, etc. The roles played by their participants are set a priori and, as a rule, remain stable during the process of communication. The speakers enter a pre-established frame which, generally, they do not modify. These routine genres best correspond to the definition of discourse genre as a socially and historically constrained communication device. Their parameters result from the stabilization of the speech constraints involved in specific social situations. It would be meaningless to wonder who invented routine genres: their existence is derived from social practices. An historian might be able to tell us who published the first newspaper, or the first medical prescription, but it does not matter very much for discourse analysis, and not at all for the users of such genres. These genres have a wide range: at one end are ritualized genres, which leave speakers very little room for manoeuvre (juridical genres, for example); at the other end are genres which offer many possibilities for personal variation.
3. *Conversational genres* of ‘ordinary’ conversation are not closely related to institutions, roles or stable scripts; their textual organization and their contents are usually rather fuzzy; their frame is constantly evolving during interaction. Conversational genres are subject to strong but predominantly *local* restrictions, whereas the constraints of routine genres are predominantly *global* and *vertical*, that is to say, imposed by ‘place’; *horizontal* constraints prevail in conversational genres : the participants are constantly negotiating their roles. In fact, conversational genres cannot be easily divided into distinct entities. Quoting Schegloff

(1999), conversation is that ‘organisation of talk which is not subject to functionally specific or context-specific restrictions or specialised practices of conventionalised arrangements’ (p. 407); on the contrary, conversation ‘is partially specifiable (and affirmatively, not residually) as a distinct speech-exchange system by reference to its distinctive turn-taking organisation’ (p. 413).

I now think that such a division into three types of genre is no longer valid, although it may be useful for didactic purposes. Using the term ‘routine’ may imply that conversations are not usually routines, which is confusing: it has been customary for this term to be used to refer to conversational interactions (Coulmas, 1981). From an empirical viewpoint too, it poses a problem: it seems more appropriate to say that ‘author genres’ are, in fact, a type of what I have previously called ‘routine genres’.

As a result, like most specialists, I now think it would be better to distinguish only *two* genre regimes, subject to quite different rules: *conversational* genres, on the one hand, and *instituted* genres on the other, a category which covers what I have previously called ‘routine’ genres and ‘author’ genres. Obviously, this distinction between conversational and instituted genres is not clear-cut: particularly in the case of ritualized conversations, verbal practices that have the properties of both regimes can be easily found. Moreover, both regimes can be used in the same speech event.²

Instituted genres are not a homogeneous set. Monologic instituted genres, whether oral or written, those which do not imply immediate interaction, can be distributed over a wide range, according to the ability of the speakers to categorize their communicative frame, and especially to elaborate a ‘scenography’ (Maingueneau, 1993, 1999). To each genre of discourse, a ‘generic scene’ is associated, which assigns parts to actors, prescribes the right place and the right moment, the medium, and the text superstructures for texts of a particular genre. But for many instituted genres another type of scene is implied: ‘scenography’, which results from the choice of discourse producers. Roughly speaking, the generic scene is part of the context, it is the very scene that the genre prescribes, whereas scenography is produced by the text. Thus, two texts belonging to the same generic scene may stage different scenographies. Preaching in a church, for instance, can be staged through a prophetic scenography, or a meditative scenography, and so on. In the former case, the speaker will speak in the way prophets do in the Bible and will give the corresponding role to his addressees; in the latter case, he will pretend to be speaking to himself.

Not all texts use scenography. As a rule, administrative genres, for instance, merely conform to the norms of their generic scenes. On the contrary, advertisements have to choose scenographies according to specific marketing strategies. For example, advertisements for shoes can employ a very wide range of scenographies: a woman in her bedroom phoning a girlfriend, a young boy describing his new shoes to his mother, etc.

Taking into account the diversity of instituted genres from this point of view, we can distinguish various levels:

- First level genres: instituted genres that are not subject to variation, or only to very little variation; their speakers follow strictly pre-established formulas and schemes: telephone directories, birth certificates, etc. In fact, we cannot really speak of ‘authors’ for such texts.
- Second level genres: genres in which speakers must produce singular utterances while obeying a very strict script: television news, business correspondence, etc.
- Third level genres: genres which tolerate distortions and give speakers the possibility of using an original scenography. A travel guide, for example, may be presented as a friendly conversation, a romantic novel, etc. In 1988, during his second presidential campaign, François Mitterand published his proposed policies in the form of a private letter addressed to the French people (*Lettre à tous les Français*). This political programme was presented by means of an unexpected scenography, but it belonged clearly to that genre, obeyed its rules (roles, length, contents, etc.; see Maingueneau, 1998).
- Fourth level genres: genres which require the invention of speech sceneries: advertising, folk songs, entertainment programs on television, etc. If you know that a text is an advertisement for a face cream, it is not sufficient to know by means of which scenography it is presented. Of course, many scenographies are stereotypical, but the logic of such genres urges people to perpetual innovation. However, such innovations are not supposed to modify the frames imposed by the genre nor to question them.
- Fifth level genres: genres for which the very notion of genre poses a problem. They are not pre-established ‘formats’, but subdetermined generic zones in which a singular person, an author with individual experience self-categorizes his or her own verbal production. This is the type of genre I was referring to earlier when I defined genres whose names are allocated by their authors: ‘essay’, ‘fantasy’, ‘thoughts’, ‘story’, etc. These authors have numerous possibilities for elaborating their own categories. Generic labels such as ‘newspaper’, ‘talk show’ and ‘lecture’ are given to activities that exist independently from those labels (actually, many discursive practices have no name at all); on the other hand, if a religious author, a politician or a moralist calls his or her text a ‘meditation’, a ‘utopia’ or a ‘report’, that label contributes significantly to the way in which the text is to be interpreted. Here the name cannot be replaced with another one, it is not a merely conventional label that identifies a verbal practice; it is the consequence of a personal decision, the evidence of an act of positioning inside a certain field and often inscribed in collective memory. But this label which an author may give to his or her text characterizes only a part of its communicative reality: when a writer calls his or her work ‘fantasy’, this category reveals very little of its effective communicative process. A generic label such as ‘newsmagazine’ refers to all the parameters typical of that discourse genre, but the label ‘fantasy’ given by a poet to his or her work does not refer to the wide range of constraints which characterize poetic publications in a given society.

Fourth and fifth level genres are similar in many aspects: both must set up stimulating scenographies to convince their audience, give sense to their own discursive activity and propose a frame which may be in harmony with the very content of their utterance. But, whereas fourth level genres, for example advertising genres, are imposed by social obligations and appeared because of precise social constraints, fifth level genres depend on the way an author brings his or her identity into play. So, choosing a generic category is more than a

rhetorical strategy: whereas advertising texts have a specific purpose (chiefly making people buy something) and are always searching for the best way to achieve this objective, religious writers or novelists cannot really define what they are aiming at when publishing their texts: 'there remain some genres for which purpose is unsuited as a primary criterion' and which 'defy ascription of communicative purposes' (Swales, 1990: 47).

An academic genre

In this article, it is not possible to analyse examples of all kinds of instituted genres. I therefore focus on a genre which belongs typically to second level genres: the French report on thesis defence meetings (abbreviation in this article : RTDM= Report on Thesis Defence Meeting). In spite of the growing internationalization of scholarship in its many aspects, this genre is still subject to strict national regulations.

The scholars who practise this genre try to comply with its norms: they do not aim at modifying the convictions of an audience, or at shaping their identity through their utterance; they only aim at showing that they are worthy members of the academic world that legitimates them by making them sit like members of the jury at their own trial. This genre implies 'strategies of perpetuation and justification that attempt to maintain, support and reproduce identities' (Van Leeuwen and Wodak, 1999: 93), but this 'identity' is the identity of a community that needs to regulate the entrance of 'immigrants', to check that they work according to its own norms.

The RTDM has strong traditions. The rites of thesis defence differ from one discipline to another, from one country to another, even from one region to another in certain countries (in Switzerland, for example). In many cases there are no reports at all after the thesis defence meeting. In this article, I focus on reports from humanities (including social and human sciences) thesis defence meetings in France; reports from mathematics or physics thesis defence meetings are quite different. In the field of the humanities, the RTDM is written after the thesis defence meeting, it is supposed to synthesize the evaluations of the members of the jury. The text is destined to appear in the files that researchers constitute when they want to be employed by an academic institution or to be promoted.

This genre is interesting for various reasons. It plays a key role in the life of researchers (including discourse analysts): in the course of their career, researchers will have to defend a thesis, and most of them will have to handle such reports when they sit on juries or commissions. In addition, the RTDM is interesting from a pragmatic viewpoint, particularly if we consider the forms of enunciative subjectivity that it implies, the way it constrains its interpretation, its strategies for softening negative judgements and its original forms of represented speech.

SPECIFICATION OF THE GENRE

The RTDM is identified by the institutional context in which it appears. It is typically a discourse genre stabilized by social activity, a genre whose rules, which are part of the communicative competence of French scholars, are learnt through practice. The people who

write such texts have no specific training, they cannot refer to a model that they can imitate, but have to set in motion tacit rules of production. As a second level instituted genre, the RTDM is highly ritualized, which is normal if we consider that it has important consequences, even juridical consequences, for the members of the academic community. In my own words, I define the RDTM as a key genre of a 'discursive community' (Maingueneau, 1984, 1991), a community that is organized around the production of specific texts.³ Beacco (1999: 14) distinguishes various sorts of discursive communities: (a) discursive communities based on *economics* (e.g. companies) in which not everybody is allowed to produce certain genres, and the distinction between external and internal communication is clear; (b) *ideological* discursive communities based on the production of values and beliefs (e.g. political parties, churches and associations) which produce many militant texts; (c) *mediatic* discursive communities, which diffuse and confront opinions and values and organize the circulation of the texts; they are turned toward the outside world and share many properties of the ideological and economical communities; and (d) discursive communities based on *technical and scientific* activities, which produce knowledge (such as the RTDM); in these communities genres are mainly 'closed' (Maingueneau, 1992: 120).

The RTDM is a good example of a 'closed' genre. The difference between 'closed' and 'open' discourses is determined by the producers and receptors of a determined speech. In closed discourses, producers and receptors tend to coincide, quantitatively and qualitatively; this is the case in most scientific writings, whose audience, in fact, is composed of people who produce texts of the same type. In open discourses, on the other hand, an enormous qualitative and quantitative difference exists between the population of producers and the population of receptors. In this respect, the cases of the popular press or of mass political discourse are exemplary: the populations of producers are very restricted groups, with strong identities, which address extremely vast populations of receptors, whose social characterization is very different from theirs, most of the time. All readers (the recruiting commission members in particular) are not necessarily writers of reports since they do not all sit on juries, but many of them are, at least occasionally. This 'closed' character of the RTDM has an interesting consequence that will be considered later: as the people who write the reports are the same as the people who read them, they can be written in coded language.

As a closed genre, the RDT is very specific since its very function is to confer the right of entering the community of researchers - that is, *the community of people who may write or read RTDM*. When you write a report in favour of a candidate, you thus imply, indirectly, that the candidate would be fit to write a RTDM. Moreover, the very act of writing a RTDM gives you the chance to show that you are worthy to be a member of the academic community, that you are an expert; as Duszak (1997) says, 'experts ... are assumed to combine high field expertise with high language skills for the purposes of scientific exposition' (p. 25). Thus, the practice of that genre cannot be considered as a mere administrative task: discursive communities maintain themselves through the production of texts, a production that presupposes the cohesion of the community from which research publications-the end production of this community - are produced. Here we must reason in terms of 'discursive institution' (Maingueneau, 1991: 169); the genre is a small verbal 'institution', but, at the same time, the institution (in the ordinary meaning of the word) in

which this genre participates, maintains itself through the genres that it makes possible and that, somehow, make this institution possible.

The RDTM can be analysed from a *local* viewpoint, as we will be done later, but it ought to be considered from a *global* viewpoint as well: a report is not insular, it is a node in an extensive network, the academic world as a whole, which is becoming increasingly international. Access to the position of a member of the jury is gained by an invitation from the 'host', the director of the thesis, which may create an obligation for the 'guest', or for the 'host'. It depends on the circumstances. If you are in possession of significant reputation 'capital' (that is to say, if you are a famous scholar), and if you accept to participate to a 'lower' jury, the colleague who invited you will owe you a debt of gratitude. On the other hand, if you are invited to join a prestigious jury, you are under an obligation to your 'host'. As the text of the RTDM is circulated to various commissions, to be commented on and become a basis for other kinds of reports, there will be feedback regarding the participation of the juries: some scholars, who are reputed to produce stern judgements, are less likely to be invited than those who are reputed to be indulgent. In this way, the academic world as a whole is involved in a vast system in which reputations are exchanged (Hagstrom, 1965).

Thus, as in other genres, the RDTM tends to modify the situation in which it participates. Its *explicit* purpose is to evaluate a thesis and, to a certain extent, the performance of the candidate during the defence meeting. But one of its *implicit* purposes is to contribute to the complex system of relations between members of the academic community.

THESIS DEFENCE MEETINGS AND THESIS DEFENCE REPORTS

The RTDM represents another discourse, an oral speech event; the thesis defence meeting ; that lasts generally three to four hours and must be conducted in front of an audience, mainly composed of friends, colleagues and relatives of the candidate. In the jury there are three to five examiners, who all speak during the meeting. The meeting opens with a presentation by the candidate, followed by interactions between the candidate and each member of the jury, at times between members of the jury; only the audience is excluded from the interaction. Very few features of this meeting are similar to those in the RTDM. Of course, the text is written after the meeting, sometimes several weeks after, but the reason why the RTDM is so different from the meeting is that these two genres have quite distinct statuses: one is a ritualized interaction, a social act of academic 'investiture'; the other is a *text*, made to last, a *monument*, in the etymological sense of the word. So, it can be easily understood why, as a rule, negative comments expressed during the meeting are considerably softened in the RTDM. In fact, during the meeting, it is in the interest of the members of the jury to elevate their positive face at the expense of devaluing the candidate's positive face: by demonstrating their aptitude for criticism, they justify their presence on the jury. But it is not in their interest to do the same thing in the RTDM: in consideration of the manifold relations between the members of the scientific community and of the complex exchange system in which they are all involved, the irreversible inscription of severe criticism on an official document may backfire on his or her author.

In a theatre, spectators perceive two communication acts at the same time: one between the author of the play and the spectator, the other between actors. In a thesis defence meeting, the setting is quite different: the interactions between the members of the jury are addressed indirectly to the audience. In terms of 'participation framework' (Goffman, 1981), the audience consists of 'overhearers' who are 'unaddressed', but the speakers are conscious of their presence and behave accordingly. Clark and Carlson (1982) speak of 'side participants' to refer to this type of setting in which the audience plays a role, although it does not take part in the interaction. Unlike the 'trilogues' (Kerbrat-Orecchioni and Plantin, 1995) of media genres, the defence meeting has no producer or presenter; it is a ritual to which various persons mandated by the institution cooperate informally (that is to say without any explicit training); they abide by juridical rules, by tacit use of the academic community to which they belong, and by conversational maxims too.

Such a 'trilogue' situation is different from that of many radio or TV programs (Charaudeau, 1991; Antona, 1995) in which silent spectators represent the invisible audience to whom the program is actually addressed. In courts of law, it is not the audience, but the defendant, the lawyer and the judges who play the key roles, as do the candidate and the jury in a thesis defence meeting. Since the members of the jury belong to the most influential part of the academic community, since the thesis director sits on this jury and the relations between the examiners are generally ambivalent and operate at various levels (personal, scientific and institutional), since the evaluation of the thesis is a very important stage of the candidate's career; interactions, even if discreet, between members of the jury in the course of the meeting are fundamental. When an examiner is involved in an interaction with the candidate, his or her interventions are inevitably oriented toward the other members. But this flood of signals is lateral; only insiders who know the state of relations between the members of the jury ; are capable of realizing their full significance.

In these circumstances, the RTDM must be radically different from the defence meeting: it cannot be a reflection of the meeting, not even a kind of abstract. They are separate genres, as separate as a theatre performance and its review in a newspaper. The contrast must be stressed between a genre that is basically theatrical, and a narrative genre that implies a distance from the setting of the original speech event. The RTDM is a text that is designated for the archives, addressed to readers who are assumed not to have attended the defence meeting.

Similar to many administrative genres, the writers of the RTDM use many stereotyped formulas, pre-established structures that they consider the 'norms' of a written text (Gülich and Krafft, 1997). These formulas play a key role in 'closed' discourse genres, since they act as a code that allows the writer to show that he or she belongs to the community: 'the structure is acknowledged simply because it is known, because it forms part of a code to which one has access (as a member of a group or as the owner of a dictionary of idioms' (p. 242). Thus, 'acknowledging' a structure, one can 'acknowledge its writer as a member of one's community' (p. 257). It is beyond the scope of this article to study these stereotyped formulas, but they are an essential component of this genre.

THE CONSTITUENTS OF THE GENRE

I now focus on some characteristics of the RTDM, without trying to propose a model that would be valid for any genre of the same type.

Purpose

The explicit purpose of the RTDM is the evaluation of a thesis and of the performance of the candidate during the thesis defence meeting; this evaluation is expounded in a document that subsequently allows other members of the institution to evaluate the aptitude of the candidate to hold a job in the research field. But, as is usual in social sciences,

... the purpose of social practices, or of segments of them, may be construed differently in different recontextualisations of that practice... They are added to activities and activity sequence in discourse. And as such they are often the stuff of controversy and debate. (Van Leeuwen and Wodak, 1999: 98)

This problem was well identified by Hymes (1972), when he reflected on the component 'ends' of his 'SPEAKING' model. It is an aspect of the question of the difference between explicit and implicit, direct and indirect finality.

Place

The place of thesis defence meetings is governed by juridical constraints: the meeting must take place on the campus of the university in which the director of the thesis works, a site that can be defined by legal criteria. But for the RTDM, the notion of 'place', inevitably, is more abstract: its 'place' is not the empirical places where it is written (the members of the jury could write their contribution on the beach as well as in their office), it is the place to which it is attributed, where it is archived (as a rule a university or some other research institution). The other aspect of its 'place' is the space in which it may circulate. The juridical 'birthplace' is the RTDM, where the document is kept and the record of the defence meeting is stored in its 'memory' (in fact its files); the original document belongs to the university and a copy is given to the candidate (previously he or she did not know the content of the report on his or her thesis). There is also the space in which the report is used to evaluate a candidate: the various commissions that will have to base their judgement on it.

Time

The temporal inscription of the RTDM can be considered from various viewpoints:

- Unlike genres such as mass or TV news, we cannot speak of 'periodicity' for the RTDM. It occurs several times during the year (in fact more so in some periods than in others), but there are no pre-established intervals between two occurrences. Its 'iterativity' can be considered from various viewpoints: those of the university where the defence meeting takes place, of the director of the thesis, of the candidate, of the members of the jury are quite different. For the candidate, the RTDM is a singular document (in principle you defend only one thesis in your life, at least in the same discipline); for the writers of the report (the director and the 'outside'

examiners), it is a reiterated practice: the director of a thesis will a priori be the director of other thesis, and during their career the members of a jury will sit on many juries. Nevertheless, some directors are very much in demand, others very little: it depends on the fame and on the power of the scholar, but also on his or her eagerness to 'guide' students. As for the members of juries, they go from one jury to another, exchanging their roles: the chairman of the jury (who may not be the director of the thesis) takes on the role of director, the director takes on the role of chairman, and so on. If, for example, in a previous thesis defence meeting, a member of jury X had his or her student severely criticized by colleague Y, that may have an influence on the behaviour of X if he sits on a jury where the candidate is a student of Y. All members of the academic world are aware of this and know that the others know that he knows, and so on: a classical case of mutual knowledge which regulates the system. Logically, an examiner will be liable to write a cautious report if he knows that later on he will need a favour from the director of the thesis he is examining.

- Knowing approximately how much time is required for the accomplishment of a genre is an essential part of generic competence. No explicit rule prescribes how long an RTDM must be, but there are some norms, resulting from various constraints. The writers of the RTDM have to produce a sufficiently informative, precise text, suitable for the purpose of the genre, but not too long (otherwise it would not be read by the experts); in addition, they do not want to spend too much time on it: writing an RTDM is generally considered as a 'boring' and unavoidable task. Unlike the thesis defence meeting, which is a social act of some prestige, writing a report is a bureaucratic obligation that does not enhance an author's reputation. These constraints of providing sufficient information without expending too much time on reading and writing usually result in the tacit norm that each member of the jury writes about two pages.

- Most published texts are valid for a certain time, according to their genre: a monthly magazine is valid for one month, the Bible claims to be eternally valid, and so on. Like many juridical documents, an RTDM cannot be out of date. This is one of the reasons why RTDM writers tend to soften the judgements they may have expressed during the thesis defence meeting: they know that, since the report is archived, it cannot be destroyed or modified. In fact, that constraint should be played down. An academic who has published numerous articles and books has very little to fear from his or her RTDM; however, the situation is quite different for someone starting his or her career. There is no doubt that a 'bad' RTDM impedes an academic career, which explains why the writing of such a document is subject to such strict control.

Presentation of the document

The report consists of a number of typed sheets (currently usually typed on a word-processor); it may be short (4 or 5 pages) or long (20 sheets, sometimes more). Most reports are about 10 sheets in length. At times the typed product is not perfect (e.g. faint ink or many different styles of fonts or spacing), which contrasts with the perfect display expected from the thesis candidate. This is an effect of the nature of the two genres. The candidate is in a 'low' position, he must present an attractive object to the jury. On the other hand, the report is written by people in a 'high' position and its function is mainly administrative: the scholars

who write such texts do not expect anything in return, they only need to be considered adequate for the role that the institution has given them. It is also a matter of ‘grooming’:

... in the case of written communication the presentation and style of the written documents must substitute for the presentation and style of the participants. A letter without a colourful logo in the letterhead, with a uniform font and an impersonal, bureaucratic style can express the same values as a grey suit and a tie without a speck of colour. (Van Leeuwen and Wodak, 1999: 95).

This ‘grooming’ is an aspect of what I have named the *discursive ethos* of written texts (Maingueneau, 1987, 1998; Amossy, 1999): written texts imply a ‘voice’ that has a specific *tone*. Readers (from heterogeneous signs given by the text) shape a more or less definite figure of the speaker’s ‘body’ that corresponds to the text. The grooming of the RTDM must not be elegant because it has to be in accordance with an austere ethos. A ‘good’ RTDM is merely a ‘clean’ document, with a homogeneous and easy-to-read font. Such austerity implies a model reader who adheres to the traditional values of science, considered as the quest for Truth: a prototypical scientist is not supposed to worry about ‘form’ at the expense of ‘content’.

Like any discourse genre strictly controlled by institutions, the RTDM is associated with a specific and conventional superstructure (Van Dijk, 1981), a highly predictable one. Adam (1999: 69) prefers to use the term ‘text plan’, historically specified, which allows the producer to construct and the addressee to reconstruct the global organization of texts of a specific genre. The text plan of an RTDM can be easily learnt, for it is very ritualized. It can be analysed as a succession of stages:

1. Paratextual indications: genre label (*Rapport sur la soutenance de la thèse*: Report on the thesis defence meeting), name of the candidate, title of the thesis, discipline, day and place of the event, name of the director and of the other participants on the jury.
2. Summary of the candidate’s presentation (this stage is not compulsory).
3. Interventions of all the members of the jury; the transition from one intervention to another is made by means of set formulas (*Le Professeur/M/Mme X prend alors la parole/intervient à son tour*: Professor/Mr/Mrs X begins to speak/intervenues in his or her turn). The interventions are presented in order during the thesis defence meeting. This order obeys strict rules: for example, the chairman’s intervention is always the last one.
4. Final evaluation (decision of the jury, distinction)
5. Signatures of all the members of the jury.

Paratextual indications (stage 1) are subject to variation:

- *Rapport sur la soutenance de la thèse de doctorat de X* (Report on the defence meeting of the doctorate thesis of X);
- *Rapport sur la soutenance de la thèse présentée par X* (Report on the defence meeting of the thesis presented by X);
- *Rapport de soutenance. Thèse de X* (Defence meeting report. Thesis of X);

- *Rapport sur la soutenance de thèse de X* (Report on the defence meeting of the thesis of X);
- *Rapport de soutenance de thèse en vue du doctorat de l'université Y. Thèse; soutenue par X* (Report on the defence meeting of the thesis for the doctorate of the university Y. Thesis defended by X).

The signatures of the members of the jury are preceded by formulas that are not quite set phrases; variations in typography can also be noted:

(a) *Après avoir délibéré, le jury accorde à Monsieur X le grade de DOCTEUR DE L'UNIVERSITE DE Y avec la mention: TRES HONORABLE avec FELICITATIONS* (After having deliberated, the jury awards the degree DOCTOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF Y with the distinction: *TRES HONORABLE avec les FELICITATIONS* [very honourable with high honours]).

(b) *Après délibération, le jury déclare Madame X digne du titre de docteur (spécialité = sciences du langage), et lui décerne la mention Très Honorable avec félicitations, à l'unanimité. (En réponse à la demande du Conseil scientifique de l'université X, le jury précise qu'il estime ce doctorat digne d'être proposé pour un prix et/ou une subvention pour publication)* (After deliberation, the jury declares **Mrs X** worthy of the title of **doctor** [specialty: language sciences], and awards her the distinction *Très honorable* [very honourable] *avec félicitations* [with high honours], *à l'unanimité* [unanimously]. [In response to the request of the Scientific Council of the university Y, the jury specifies that they think that this doctorate is worthy of being recommended for a prize and/or a grant for publication]).

(c) *Après avoir délibéré, le jury, à l'unanimité, accorde la mention TRES HONORABLE AVEC FELICITATIONS à X* (After having deliberated, the jury unanimously awards X the distinction *TRES HONORABLE AVEC FELICITATIONS* [very honourable with high honours]).

(d) *Le jury, après avoir délibéré, déclare Madame X digne du titre de Docteur de l'Université de Y, en Sciences du langage, avec la mention* (The jury, after having deliberated, declares Mrs X worthy of the title of Doctor of the University, in Language Sciences, with the distinction *Très Honorable avec Félicitations, à l'unanimité* [Very Honourable with High Honours, unanimously]).

(e) *Après délibération du jury, Monsieur X a été déclaré digne du titre de Docteur d'Université, avec la mention* (After the deliberation of the jury, Mr X was declared worthy of the title of Doctor of the university, with the distinction *Très Honorable à l'unanimité* [Very Honourable unanimously]).

(f) *Après une courte délibération, les membres du jury s'accordent pour attribuer la mention "Très Honorable". Elle leur paraît bien correspondre à l'appréciation portée sur le candidat: un chercheur dont le potentiel est évident, capable de proposer et d'élaborer une « thèse » (au sens plein du mot), dans un domaine où il a commencé à marquer sa place. Il manque encore un effort de conceptualisation et de modélisation que l'on sent tout à fait à la portée du candidat* (After a short deliberation, the members of the jury have agreed to award the distinction: 'Very Honourable'. It seems to them that it well corresponds to their evaluation of the candidate: a researcher whose

possibilities are evident, capable of proposing and elaborating a “thesis” (in the full sense of the word), in a domain where he has begun to make his mark.

I have reproduced the original fonts; as we can see, the writers freely use heavy type and capitals to stress what they want. Various set phrases are used to refer to the same thing: *accorder le grade de* (award the degree, *déclarer digne du titre de* (declare worthy of the title), *s'accorder pour attribuer la mention* (agree to give a distinction), *accorder la mention* (give a distinction). Some specify the discipline the thesis belongs to, others do not. The only thing which seems stable is the introduction formula: *après avoir délibéré/délibération* (after having deliberated/deliberation). This is probably because it is an important boundary signal, which shows the passage from the succeeding interventions to the verdict, given collectively by the jury. It is worth noting that (b) and (f) comment on the distinction that is awarded, but for opposite motives: in (b) the commentary says indirectly that the thesis has been highly commended, while in (f) it allows one to infer that this is a very mediocre doctorate.

The interventions of the members of the jury are confined to a script, which requires that they first give positive, then negative aspects, and conclude with a global evaluation. This, at least, is the normal script, the one expected by the academic community. The evaluation is structured by a sort of topic (in the rhetorical sense), whose two perspectives are the presentation of the text (typography, spelling, style, bibliography and plan) and the scientific interest of the thesis (corpus, topic, methodology and conclusions). Examiners may ignore the first perspective of this topic, but not the second one.

Authors and addressees

A PLURAL AUTHOR

The RTDM requires ‘writers’ (the participants in the jury) to be legitimized by the institution, holders of titles whose list is established by juridical documents. Their legitimacy is based solely on their academic standing: their sex, nationality, age and religion are not pertinent. But the processing of the text is assigned to only one person, whom I shall name arbitrarily the *compiler*. He or she is not mentioned in the text, but neither is he or she really anonymous: if you know the tacit rules of the genre, you can guess the identity of the compiler (as a rule it is usually the chairman of the jury). Yet, the responsibility for the verdict and the responsibility for the report as a whole is collective. Here we have the manifestation of an authorship structure that is common in juridical discourse. However, contrary to institutions like ‘the State’, ‘the Court’, ‘Company X’, etc. which are normally represented by a member of the collective (usually the president), who appends his or her signature in its name, in the case of the RTDM *all* the members of the jury sign their names. This is probably because each member, at another level, is also responsible for his or her own intervention.

Thus, in the RTDM the evaluation is both divisible and indivisible: divisible as regards each intervention (‘Mr X intervenes to say that’) and indivisible at the time of the verdict (‘the jury declares’). This phenomenon is connected to the ambiguity of the genre,

which is at one and the same time an evaluation made by different persons, various scholars of the same discipline, and the ‘story’, told from a neutral viewpoint, of an event: the thesis defence meeting.

The compiler, the scholar who ‘cooks up’ the text plays two parts:

- (i) he or she is an *organizer*, who collects and orders the different interventions, manages to get the signatures, attends to the presentation of the text, adds a paratext.
- (ii) he or she is also a *narrator* who summarizes the candidate’s presentation⁴ (but not always), inserts some linking notes⁵ and writes the conclusion; in fact the verdict; sometimes with a commentary.

I have distinguished two roles: *narrator* and *organizer*. The organizer makes a text conform materially to the norms of the institution. The narrator converts the oral interventions of the thesis defence meeting into the form of a story. Instead of mentioning particular speeches, they must be embedded into a series of actions: ‘Then Mr X intervenes and declares that ...’, ‘Mrs Y intervenes and stresses that ...’. Today, the role of narrator, as a rule, is not given just to the compiler, but is distributed among the members of the jury, who are co-narrators of their own intervention(s).

However, this was not always the case. Two phases can be distinguished in the production of the RTDM: [

- (a) the traditional situation, in which a single writer was both ‘organizer’ and ‘narrator’ and synthesized the interventions of the other members in a report that they all signed. The text produced was homogeneous (one style of spacing and one font).
- (b) the more recent situation, in which the writer merely collected the texts, juxtaposing them according to the order of the interventions during the thesis defence meeting. This is the system that prevails today. That simplification has been made possible because the members of the jury agree to write their contribution in the third person singular, ready to be inserted in the report. In fact, there are two variations, sometimes both present in the same text. In the first variant, the different contributions are juxtaposed and the whole is photocopied (in this way, the compiler does not have to type the texts again). The result of such a proceeding is a text with differing fonts, levels of inking and margins. In the second and more recent variant, the members of the jury send a file by e-mail or give a floppy disk to the compiler, who then ‘organises’ the text on a computer. The result is a perfectly homogeneous text.

As noticed by discourse analysts, evolutions of work practices which, to all appearances, are merely technical often have considerable consequences at a different level, if they bring about a evolution of another type. That is the case here.

The fact that examiners write their own interventions naming themselves in the third person has an effect on the tone and content. As there is no longer a single author, solely responsible for the organization and narration of the text, each examiner, according to the system of coordination, must write his or her own intervention while ignoring the reactions of the other members he or she shares the writing with. Under these circumstances, examiners tend to conform to writing routines prescribed by the genre, to neutralize their usual style of

writing in order to produce a 'smooth' text, which fits in with the contributions of their fellow examiners. They comply with the ethos and speech style imposed by the genre.

This new procedure encourages a strong tendency in the manner of writing such reports in which members of juries express very few explicit negative evaluations; readers have to develop the capacity of finding criticism 'between the lines'. This introduces a mutual knowledge process, well-known by specialists of pragmatics: X knows that Y knows the rules, Y knows that X knows the rules and that X knows that Y knows the rules, and so on. Contributors to the report are aware of the importance of that genre for the career of the researchers; they know too that the people interested in that report (mainly the candidate, his or her director and the groups they belong to) know how important it is. In these circumstances, they know that their own contribution will then be judged by other members of the academic community and that an excessively negative (in consideration of the implicit norms of the discipline at the time) judgement may backfire on them. Logically, such a system must tend to the neutralization of evaluations, in order to produce very few asymmetries in the exchange network. Consequently, the members of the jury have divided loyalties: they must neutralize their judgements to avoid making enemies, *and* obey the transcendent norms of academic institutions that require from them a judgement based on their deep convictions. Thus, there is a difficult negotiation to be made between legitimization by good integration within the community and legitimization by the norms that established the community.

ADDRESSES AND STRATEGIES OF READING

When we talk about the 'reader' of a text, it can mean various things (Maingueneau, 1990): the *actual audience* (the people who read it); the *generic audience* (the audience to whom the text is addressed); the *model reader* (the type of reader that can be inferred from the properties of the text); or the *addressed reader* (the one explicitly specified by the text).

The actual audience of the report is a priori not very different from its generic audience: only relatives and friends of the candidate, office workers who work in academic institutions, or at times some discourse analysts, do not belong to the generic audience. That generic audience is not determined by some explicit rule that would stipulate who is allowed to read a RTDM: it is the way in which this genre circulates that specifies the audience as constituted, normally, of the candidate and the academic commissions to which this type of document is given. The model reader can be easily described: as a closed discourse genre, the RTDM, by its linguistic, discursive and encyclopaedic properties, implies readers who belong to the academic world or are acquainted with it.

The writer of an RTDM must anticipate the strategies of reading. This genre allows two main strategies:

- *integral* reading, that follows the continuity of the text; this is the prescribed reading;
- *selective* reading by an expert reader who, mastering the rules of the genre, chooses some outstanding passages (particularly the list of the members of the jury, the conclusions of each intervention, the final evaluation, the distinction awarded). The genre favours a non-linear reading as it is composed of interventions that are independent of each other.

Both strategies are expected by the writers, who are also readers of the genre. So, they carefully stress demarcation signals between interventions, generally closed by a synthetic evaluative formula that is at the same time an end signal and an abstract. Here are some examples:

X conclut son intervention en disant le plaisir qu'il a eu à découvrir ce travail et tous les vœux qu'il forme pour sa très large diffusion (X concludes his or her intervention by saying how pleased he or she has been to examine that work and hopes it will meet with the widest distribution).

En conclusion X estime que Mme Y a réalisé une très bonne thèse (In short, X judges that Mrs Y wrote a very good thesis).

Très satisfait des réponses apportées par la candidate, X se joindra à ses collègues pour attribuer la mention Très Honorable avec Félicitations (Very satisfied with the answers given by the candidate, X will join his or her colleagues to award the distinction Very Honourable with High Honours).

Ces réserves faites, X félicite le candidat pour l'ampleur et la richesse de son travail (These reservations being made, X congratulates the candidate for the breadth and the richness of his or her work).

Mais que ces légers regrets ne fassent pas oublier l'essentiel: la thèse de X constitue un pas important dans un domaine riche et négligé (But in spite of these minor reservations we must not forget the main point: the thesis of X constitutes an important step in a rich and neglected field).

M X conclut en soulignant la cohérence de ce travail qui force le respect par son sérieux et sa rigueur (Mr X concludes by emphasizing the coherence of that work whose seriousness and rigor compel respect).

AN INTERPRETATION AT TWO LEVELS

Let us suppose that the following sentence was found in a report: 'X is a meticulous researcher whose work distinguishes itself by its seriousness'. On one level, for speakers who do not belong to the academic world, it is a compliment. But, at a second level, an expert reader will probably interpret such a sentence to mean, on the contrary, that the candidate is a very mediocre researcher.

This example is quite artificial, because the judgement (positive/negative) is not built from an isolated sentence, but from the convergence of various indicators that are balanced in a computation. A short compliment after a long series of serious reproaches will not be given the same value as the same compliment occurring at the beginning of a series of eulogistic propositions. The argumentative move in which the sentence is involved is important too. Let us compare these two distinct contextualizations of our example:

1. *X est un chercheur méticuleux dont le travail se signale par son sérieux (E1). Mais c'est aussi un chercheur audacieux qui ouvre des pistes nouvelles (E2).* (X is a meticulous researcher whose work distinguishes itself by its seriousness (E1). *But* he or she is also an audacious researcher who opens up new lines of inquiry).

2. *X est un chercheur méticuleux dont le travail se signale par son sérieux (E1). Il ou elle a patiemment relevé toutes les occurrences et dressé des tableaux (E2).* (X is a meticulous researcher whose work distinguishes itself by its seriousness (E1). He or she has patiently recorded all the occurrences and drawn up tables (E2)).

In (1) the writer uses the argumentative topos (Anscombe, 1995): 'the more serious you are, the less imaginative you are', and reverses it to the advantage of the candidate, eliminating the opposite topos, negative in empirical disciplines: 'the more imaginative you are, the less serious you are'. As a result, E1 is eulogistic. The argumentative value of *mais*, as is often the case, permits the reversal of the argumentative orientation (Ducrot et al., 1980). On the other hand, in (2) the second proposition confirms the negative value of E1, which is illustrated by an example.

Now, let us compare three conclusive formulas extracted from our corpus. The first one has already been mentioned:

(a) *Après une courte délibération, les membres du jury s'accordent pour attribuer la mention "Très honorable". Elle leur paraît bien correspondre à l'appréciation portée sur le doctorant: un chercheur dont le potentiel est évident, capable de proposer et d'élaborer une "thèse" (au sens plein du mot), dans un domaine où il a commencé à marquer sa place. Il manque un effort de conceptualisation et de modélisation que l'on sent tout à fait à la portée du doctorant. (After a short deliberation, the members of the jury have agreed to award the distinction: 'Very Honourable'. It seems to them that it well corresponds to their evaluation of the candidate: a researcher whose possibilities are evident, capable of proposing and elaborating a 'thesis' (in the full sense of the word), in a domain where he has begun to make his mark. The present missing qualities of conceptualization and modelization will soon be, there is no doubt, within the grasp of the candidate.)"*

(b) *Après délibération, le jury décerne à X le titre de docteur en Y avec la mention très honorable et les félicitations du jury* (After deliberation, the jury awards X the title of doctor in Y with a very honourable distinction and the congratulations of the jury).

(c) *Après en avoir délibéré, le jury déclare X digne du titre de docteur en ..., et lui accorde la mention très honorable avec les félicitations du jury, mention accordée à l'unanimité.* (After deliberation, the jury declares X worthy of the title of doctor in Y, and awards him or her a very honourable distinction with the congratulations of the jury, a distinction awarded unanimously).

From (a) to (b) and (c) the appreciation is clearly much more positive, as indicated by the difference between the two distinctions (with vs without congratulations). But for (b) and (c) it is hard to say which is considered the better one; only the convergence of indications in the whole text would allow the reader to infer a good or bad opinion.

Those interpretation strategies are typical of the genre. Generally such phenomena are studied in other corpora. Pragmatic studies work almost on everyday interactions. On the other hand, traditional practices of commentary prefer texts that demand a *hermeneutic* approach, in the full sense of the word, that is to say, texts (religious, literary, etc.) which are supposed to conceal essential meanings hidden to the ordinary reader. When a text is considered inside a 'hermeneutic frame' (Maingueneau, 1995), the interpreter must do more than understand it, he or she must postulate that no interpretation can really be sufficient, that the text is beyond any interpretation. We cannot speak of a 'hermeneutic frame' for texts that are only difficult to understand, that only need to be clarified, that do not conceal any secret: this is the case for juridical or mathematical texts, whose meaning is obscure for people who are not experts.

This distinction between interpretative strategies required for ordinary conversation and strategies required for 'hermeneutic' texts is too simple. In fact, there are numerous interpretative practices to which it does not apply. Let us think, for example, of psychotherapeutic talk, in which the psychologist is always deciphering the words of the patient. Moreover, various genres are made precisely to be read by two audiences: a 'first level' audience, that reads the literal meaning, and a 'second level' audience, that is capable of extracting implicit propositions from a text which, to ordinary people, may seem quite univocal. That is typically the case for many discourses produced by diplomats or by politicians. The double reading is possible because there are professionals, specialists (a second level audience) who share the same code as the producers of the texts. Thus, political discourse on television is immediately interpreted by experts for the benefit of viewers. As a result, these genres are constituted in a way that may satisfy both audiences, which are often tightly connected: in political discourse, the interpretations given by the second level audience often have a considerable influence on the reception of the first level audience.

This notion of a double audience is valid for the RTDM too. Owing to the mirror relationship between writers and readers of these kinds of text, a consequence of the fact that it is a 'closed' genre; such a genre is supposed to be read between the lines by the competent members of academic institutions. But the situation differs from the situation of political discourse, where there are two audiences who have access to two different levels of meaning. As the RTDM is read exclusively, or almost exclusively, by scholars belonging to a certain discipline, very few people will have access to the literal meaning. If you are a member of such a community, you are supposed to master the interpretation of such texts. In addition, whereas political commentators, according to their political leanings, diverge about implicit meanings, as a rule academic readers of RTDM agree on the way the candidate must be evaluated. Since this genre is basically made for the evaluation of a thesis and uses stereotypical formulas, this is not at all surprising.

This phenomenon is somewhat reminiscent of what Austin (1975: 130) says about an illocutionary act performed by means of another one: if bridge players say 'three clubs', they declare 'three clubs', but also give their partner the information that they have no diamonds, by virtue of an extralinguistic convention familiar to bridge players. In the same way, by saying 'X is a meticulous researcher whose work distinguishes itself by its seriousness', one states the content of this utterance, but conveys also the information that X is a mediocre

researcher. It may happen, for bridge as for RTDM, that a receptor does not master the conventions; but in the case of bridge, those conventions are taught openly, whereas in the case of RTDM they are of necessity learnt informally.

The comparison between those two verbal practices cannot go very far. Bridge players have no other solution than to use indirect communication since they are not allowed, by the rules of the game, to speak with their partner; thus, indirect communication is an essential component of the game. A player who would not accept to communicate by indirect means *could not* play, I mean play seriously, with good players. However, the writer of an RTDM who uses indirect communication behaves in the same way as in conventional routines of politeness: people obey them to be integrated into society, though they are not obliged to do so: a member of a jury may express his or her judgement directly. Indirect speech acts, such as ‘It’s cold in here’ when the speaker wants someone to close the window, are supposed to soften direct requests. What is paradoxical in such an indirect request is the *explicitly hidden* character of the request: it is at the same time hidden and perfectly explicit for any speaker. In the same way, in an RTDM, the members of the academic community receive utterances whose implicit meaning is quite clear. Yet, unlike indirect speech acts, bridge declarations and RTDM statements are not cancelled: the illocutionary force of the utterance “‘It’s cold here’” is cancelled by the request, whereas the illocutionary force and the content of ‘X is a meticulous researcher whose work distinguishes itself by its seriousness’ or of ‘Three clubs’ are not cancelled.

In these circumstances, one might wonder to whom the ‘first level’ statements of reports are addressed. An analysis could be suggested for which the statement would imply two addressees: a naive addressee, who would have access only to the first level meaning, and a second level addressee, an expert. This would be a polyphonic (Ducrot, 1984) structure. However, this goes beyond the scope of this article.

It would be interesting to propose a test. Passages extracted from reports would be presented to three distinct groups: learned people who do not belong to the academic world, academics belonging to that specific discipline, and academics belonging to a very different discipline. It could be verified whether people who understand the common rules of politeness are competent enough to interpret correctly the judgements expressed in an indirect way in reports. Otherwise, it can be presumed that mastering the interpretation of those reports is not a matter of politeness but an aspect of the competence of any academic of any discipline. In my view, it is likely that some inferences can be made by anybody, some are exclusive to academics, and others exclusive to academics belonging to the discipline involved in the report. Another series of tests could be done on the indicators that trigger implicit meanings: by modifying them, it must be possible to define more precisely the role they play in the interpretation.

In this article I have studied an academic genre. Beyond the specific problems inherent in it, I think that discourse analysis must raise exciting questions about the relationship between the linguistic properties of texts and the properties of discursive communities (Maingueneau, 1984), that is to say, communities whose main function in society is to produce and manage certain kinds of texts. One of the essential characteristics of discourse analysis is to articulate ways of speaking and their relationship to institutions. Diverse closed

communities deal with discourse in a similar way: for them, discourse is both a ‘transitive’ activity, that aims at intervening in social reality and an ‘intransitive’ activity, that allows the members of the group to elaborate their identities. Through the creation of privileged academic genres, writers are constantly legitimizing the place they occupy or want to occupy; occasionally, they also transform, almost imperceptibly, the very field of their discursive activity.

NOTES

1. I could use the expression ‘viva voce’ but the academic event it refers to is very different from the French *soutenance de thèse*; this is why I prefer to use this periphrastic phrase throughout this article.

2. A very important (and classical) problem is to know whether ordinary conversation lies outside genre category. Swales (1990), for example, argues that it is ‘a pre-generic “form of life”’ (p. 59). Others distinguish various registers in ordinary conversation, not genres, strictly speaking. However, if ‘genre’ applies to conversation, it cannot be in a similar way to instituted genres. There is no room to discuss this issue in this article.

3. This concept of ‘discursive community’ differs a little from Swales’ concept of a ‘discourse community’ (1990). I agree with most of the criteria he gives when defining discourse communities, but I think that speaking of ‘a set of common public goals’ is not sufficient to characterize discursive communities, whose main goal is to produce texts. So, roughly speaking, my discursive community is a subset of Swales’ discourse community. In that respect, the Hong Kong Study Circle would not be a discursive community.

4. For example: *La soutenance débute à 14H15. Le Président donne la parole à X qui, en moins d’une demie-heure, présente sa recherche avec beaucoup d’aisance, de sobriété et de clarté, en fait un bilan lucide et constructif, et trace des perspectives d’avenir pour continuer et élargir son travail à la fois dans le domaine strictement linguistique et dans le domaine didactique* (The meeting begins at 14H15. The Chairman invites X to speak who, in less than half an hour, presents his or her research with great ease, with sobriety and clarity, draws up a lucid and constructive assessment of it, and opens future prospects to continue and extend his or her work, in the strict domain of linguistics and in the domain of didactics).

5. For example: *Le Président donne la parole à X, le rapporteur de la thèse, qui commence par complimenter Madame Y pour la présentation très claire et très complète qu’elle a faite de ses travaux* (The Chairman invites X to speak, the *rapporteur* of the thesis, who begins by congratulating Mrs Y for the very clear and complete presentation that she has made of her research).

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