

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Since the 1980s there has been increasing interest in genre-based approaches to analyze written and spoken discourse. Genre analysis has been a widely recognized concept, concerning the analysis of language and “the action it is used to accomplish” (Miller, 1984, p.151 as cited in Swales, 1990, p.44). In particular, genre analysis involves the study of the context in which the language is used and the analysis of move structure and linguistic features of the text. “The principle aim of genre analysis is pedagogic” (Thompson, 1994); it offers knowledge of a genre mainly concerning its purpose of use, organizational structure and linguistic patterns, thus providing writers and learners of the genre with useful models or guidelines of how to produce the genre. To a large extent, genre analysis has been driven by the concerns of teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) to provide non-native English students or beginners of a discourse community with models and descriptions of professional and academic texts, and to improve their ability to understand and produce those texts (Brett, 1994; Holmes, 1997; Hyland, 2002a, 2002b; Swales, 1990;). Genre analysis in ESP was introduced by the study of Swales (1990) on research article introductions (RAIs). His study has motivated a lot of research varying from academic genres in such disciplines as sciences, social sciences or medical science to professional genres such as law and business. In addition, genre analysis also has an implication for the design of ESP materials. According to Bhatia (1991), genre analysis is “a viable applied linguistic procedure to describe authentic linguistic data, and this procedure reveals a realistic cognitive structure associated with that genre”. This would allow “the ESP materials designer to provide input relevant to the tactical aspect of genre-specific writing”.

English for Airline Business is considered a field in ESP. In the airline industry public addresses (i.e. on-board announcements) are made by crew personnel, namely pilots and flight attendants, on an aircraft during a flight to communicate with the passengers. Employed in such a formal context, a public address (which can be referred to as “PA”) is often prepared beforehand as a written speech. This kind of

discourse could be tentatively defined as an informative message used to convey information to passengers. These announcements differ from those of such academic genres as lectures, reviews, research articles, or oral presentations in terms of illocutionary act, using a sentence to perform a function.

1.2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Despite the great benefits of genre analysis, studies on genre analysis, which involve either the use of the genre approach in teaching writing (e.g. Badger & White, 2000; Flowerdew, 2000; Marshall, 1991) or the analysis of text structure (e.g. Brett, 1994; Holmes, 1997; Vongvanit, 2001) are all centered on academic genres. Since little attention has been given to the texts used in the airline industry and, after an extensive review of research in this area, it has been found that the written genre in professional settings like that of public addresses has not been previously researched, the present research is a genre-based analysis of a public address discourse. This research will employ the genre analysis framework of Swales (1990) and a further developed framework for analyzing unfamiliar genre by Bhatia (1993).

As Thai Airways International Public Company Limited (to be referred to as “THAI”) is one of the leading airlines in the Kingdom of Thailand and is well-known in the airline industry throughout the world, its public address discourse is considered standard and complies with the regulations of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO); a United Nations’ agency that codifies the principles and techniques of international air navigation and fosters the planning and development of international air transport to ensure safe and orderly growth.

This study, therefore, will present a genre analysis of the public address used on board THAI flights to answer the following questions:

1.2.1 What are the communicative purposes of THAI’s public address?

1.2.2 What rhetorical moves are typically employed in THAI’s public address?

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are:

1.3.1 To investigate the communicative purposes of the public address used on board THAI aircraft.

1.3.2 To explore the typical rhetorical moves in THAI's public address.

1.4 DEFINITION OF TERMS

Definitions of the terms of this study are the following:

Genre: a type of discourse that occurs in a particular setting, which has distinctive and recognizable patterns and norms of organizations and structure, and that has a particular and distinctive communicative function (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, p.224).

Genre analysis: the study of how language is used in a particular context. Genres differ in that each has a different goal and employs different patterns of structure and organization to achieve its goals. In the study of written texts, genre analysis studies how writers conventionally sequence material to achieve particular purposes (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, p.224).

Move: a unit or stage that relates both to the writer's purpose and to the content that is aimed to communicate (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998)

Step: a lower level text unit than the move that provides a detailed perspective on the options to the writer in organizing the moves of a text (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998)

Rhetorical pattern/structure: organizational structure that the writer uses in a text to achieve a communicative purpose of the genre in an effective way

Prototypicality: the degree to which a text is typical of a particular genre

Public Address (PA): an announcement made aboard an aircraft by crew personnel in order to inform, make a request, or provide instructions to the passengers in case of irregular situations

THAI: Thai Airways International Public Company Limited

ESP: English for Specific Purposes

1.5 SCOPE OF STUDY

1) This research only analyzes the public address discourse used in THAI. The reason is that, since studies on public addresses have never been conducted before, this study aims to merely initiate the realization of the existence of the patterns in this type of genre.

2) Public addresses include all the announcements made on an aircraft both by the flight attendants and the pilots. In this study, only the announcements made by the flight attendants were analyzed.

3) The study focused on public address involving main announcements made on every flight throughout the flight (e.g. before taking off, during the flight, before landing at the destination and after landing at the destination) which excludes any emergency or spontaneous announcements.

4) Although the public address is delivered in a spoken method, the text was analyzed from its written form. Therefore, the announcer's English pronunciation and proficiency was not taken into consideration.

1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This particular discourse is utilized in the airline industry; therefore, benefits from this study might be limited to English for Specific Purposes (ESP), notably English for Airline Business.

In addition, the genre in question is a copyright property of Thai Airways International Public Company Limited. It is, therefore, not appropriate to insert the text in this study as an appendix.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

A public address functions as a vehicle that conveys information to passengers on board an aircraft. Any language can be used; however English seems to be the required language, especially on international flights. Public addresses not only function as the means of getting the message through, but they also play an important role in promoting institutional relations and collaboration in academic and professional circles.

As none of the previous studies have examined prepared public addresses, the findings of the present study can help language teachers to understand the genre of public address discourse and can provide the framework of genre analysis to their students. By the same token, the results could also be beneficial to English language learners to understand how a public address is organized and to understand the communicative purpose or the intention of the speaker or institution through the language used. In addition, the description of organizational structure in public addresses can be pedagogically useful in developing writing and reading materials for an ESP course in English for Airline Business. Lastly, the findings of the investigation should be helpful for beginners of a discourse community who seek to prepare public addresses or other similar types of announcements.

1.8 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The study of genre analysis of public address discourse in this paper is divided into five chapters:

1.8.1 Chapter 1 describes background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, definition of terms, scope of the study and significance of the study.

1.8.2 Chapter 2 accounts for related literature review, theoretical backgrounds, and relevant research studies.

1.8.3 Chapter 3 discusses the methodology of undertaking this research. It describes materials, data collection, and data analysis.

1.8.4 Chapter 4 describes the findings of the study.

1.8.5 Chapter 5 summarizes the findings, discusses interesting findings, and provides recommendations.