

Contents

<i>List of Tables and Figures</i>	vii
<i>Preface</i>	ix
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xii
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xiv

Part I Formulaic Genres

1 What are Formulaic Genres?	3
2 A Day at the Races	26
3 Forecasting the Weather	42
4 Polite Genres in a Multilingual Community: Greeting and Eating in Singapore	58
5 Playing a False Part: Projecting and Perceiving Fraudulent Identities on the Internet	75

Part II Genrelects

6 Idiolectal Variation: Ritual Talk at the Supermarket Checkout	95
7 Genrelects, Gender and Politeness: Form and Function in Controlling the Body	116
8 Regional Genrelects in Engagement Notices	138
9 Revolutionary Change: Formula Change during the Cultural Revolution, People's Republic of China	157

10	Historical Variation: The Historical Reconstruction of Proto-English Auction Speech	177
11	Volitional Variation: Humour and Formulae	191
	<i>Notes</i>	207
	<i>References</i>	214
	<i>Index</i>	222

1

What are Formulaic Genres?

All ritual has a notable tendency to reduce itself to a rehearsal of formulae.

Veblen (1994:75)

1.1 Introduction

This book is about becoming a proficient native speaker of a language, that is, becoming someone who is both a native speaker of a language and who is communicatively competent in the language(s) they have acquired. There are many elements to such proficiency. One significant element in being a proficient native speaker is acquiring and being able to utilize the formulaic genres of the speech communities in which you live and work. Formulaic genres are at the interface between knowing a language and being able to use a language appropriately since such genres integrate these two capacities. The first section of this book will examine the stable features of a set of formulaic genres and thereby illustrate something of their nature. The second section will look at how formulaic genres vary and change.

Becoming a proficient user of a language has two aspects: acquiring it and learning how to use it. To use a hammer you must first have a hammer at hand, while using a hammer for the uses for which it is appropriate is another matter. In many respects this analogy is useful, but not in all respects. Certainly you must be able to produce the sounds of the language you speak and to recognize them in the speech of others. You must know the rules of the syntax of the language and its morphology. The analogy breaks down in the case of the acquisition of vocabulary. Items of vocabulary can have associated conditions for their use, which means that such an item of vocabulary cannot be learned

without also learning how it is to be used. Such conditions of use are of two kinds: linguistic and non-linguistic. For example, the word *elephant* is a noun. As such it must be used in certain positions in a sentence and not in others. Syntactic categories essentially specify where a word may be used in the language system. A word like *Balderdash!*, uttered on its own as a sentence, has no syntactic category indicating where in a sentence it may be used. The same is true for the word *yes*. But there are non-linguistic conditions of use for a word like *Balderdash*. These conditions indicate how it may be used socially, in this case as an exclamation of disbelief at something someone else has asserted. A word like *Excellency*, which is used as a polite form of address for (amongst others) ambassadors, has both a linguistic category, that of being a noun, and it also has non-linguistic usage conditions in that it is a polite form of address. Its use cannot be inferred from anything else we know about the item and must therefore be an independent piece of knowledge about the word.

The foregoing discussion suggests that vocabulary items can be distinguished along two parameters, as to whether or not they have linguistic, and non-linguistic, conditions of use:

	yes	no
linguistic conditions of use (lcu)		
non-linguistic conditions of use (nlcu)		

These parameters allow us to provide the following feature specifications for the words below:

elephant [+lcu, -nlcu]
Balderdash! [-lcu, +nlcu]
yes [-lcu, -nlcu]
Excellency [+lcu, +nlcu]

The analogy between languages and tools also breaks down when you look at how the existence of a tool and learning how to use it are sequenced. Unlike physical tools such as hammers and their use, language and its acquisition frequently intertwine. Certainly a child does not have to wait until the whole of their grammar is acquired before being able to speak with and understand other people. People continue to acquire new vocabulary items throughout life; no-one would suggest that a person is a proficient speaker of a language only when all vocabulary items in the language have been learned.

The notion of a proficient native speaker is thus problematic. Linguists have traditionally been interested in the linguistic knowledge acquired by speakers, but the exact nature of that knowledge is not obvious, since it is tacit. The knowledge of a language acquired by a native speaker must therefore be modelled and the model tested against what can be found out from speakers and how they perform. Part of that knowledge is knowledge of vocabulary. The vocabulary which will be in focus in the following chapters requires a distinction to be made between those lexical items which are structurally simple and those which are structurally complex. Structurally simple items of vocabulary are mono-morphemic in that they have only one meaning-bearing element. *Elephant* is mono-morphemic. Unlike *elephantitis* and *Excellency*, it cannot be broken down into meaningful sub-units. Structurally complex lexical items can have two kinds of structure: word structure or syntactic structure. Those with syntactic structure are phrasal lexical items such as, for example, *Your Excellency* and *take something apart*.

A second set of features can, therefore, be used to distinguish among lexical items on the basis of their structure (Fiedler, 2007:17). In the table all lexical items with the feature [\pm wlc] are [-ss] and all lexical items with the feature [\pm dw] are [+wlc]:

	yes	no
structurally simple (ss)		
word level complexity (wlc)		
derived word (dw)		

This set of classifications yields the following feature specifications:

Mono-morphemic words [+ss], e.g. *elephant*

Derived words [+dw], e.g. *elephantitis*

Compound words [-dw], e.g. *elephant reservation*

Phrasal lexical items [-wlc], e.g. *a white elephant*

This classification intersects in obvious ways with the earlier classification according to conditions of use. Since the following chapters will be concerned primarily with phrasal lexical items (PLIs), it should be noted that PLIs always have linguistic conditions of use. This is because phrases by definition have syntactic categories which determine where they may be used in sentences. For example *take advantage of* is a verb phrase and will only fit in those locations in sentences where verb phrases fit. However PLIs may or may not have non-linguistic conditions of use.

For example, the phrase *take advantage of* is part of the vocabulary of English and thus a lexical item but it has no non-linguistic conditions of use. It is not restricted to particular speakers or particular occasions. *Your Excellency*, on the other hand, is restricted to particular situations. It is a form of address used to particular persons on particular occasions. The ambassador's husband would not (except jokingly) address her as *Your Excellency* when they were about to do the dishes, but a guest at a reception at which she was present might well be expected to use this form of address.

Lexical items with the features [-wlc, +nlcu] can be termed *formulae*. The following chapters explore the significance of formulae in the repertoire of native speakers.

Non-linguistic conditions of use which have so far been presented as examples are rather simple. *Your Excellency* is restricted to contexts where formal address is required and it is a form of address restricted to certain persons (Gullen, 2002). Formulae can involve much more complex conditions of use. At this point one illustration will suffice to make this clear: the formula *He's old enough to be your father*.¹ Native speakers of some varieties of English know this formula and, having acquired it, they have acquired a set way of expressing a number of cultural relationships, and mores. In knowing this formula you must know the conditions of its use: who may use it to whom and so forth. The norm is that it should be used only by close female relatives, and perhaps acquaintances, to each other. Others venture to use the formula at some risk. You must also know the general situation in which it is used. The situation is that a young woman is contemplating, or is already involved in, a sexual relationship with an older man. The purpose of uttering the formula is to dissuade the young woman from continuing her relationship with the man. The formula will also normally be used in relative privacy.

There are perhaps deeper cultural messages involved. The first suggestion is that it is not in order for young women to be sexually involved with older men. Second, such relationships are akin to incest between father and daughter and there is an incest taboo prohibiting such relationships. Third, female relatives, particularly older, close female relatives, are responsible for maintaining and controlling the sexual behaviour of young women. That these are a minimal set of conditions of use can be seen from the fact that native speakers share intuitions about this formula. They will, for example, elicit such normative descriptions when asked and will recognize the intent of speakers using this formula in a situation comedy or soap opera. Native speakers

also know that there is no formula *She's old enough to be your mother* or an equivalent to it. This indicates that, in the culture which has access to this formula, sexual activity between young women and older men is proscribed more closely than sexual activity between younger men and older women (or perhaps that is beyond proscription). Native speakers also know that there is a threshold of closeness to the addressee. Mother, aunt, grandmother, sister and close female friend all appear appropriate users of the formula.

The two formulae used as illustrations so far have conditions of use which are socially determined. They are also formulae which can be used more or less in isolation. What comes before and after *Your Excellency* is not closely predetermined by the formula itself. That is also true of *He's old enough to be your father*. Other formulae, however, play a subordinate role in larger stretches of discourse. For example, dyadic greetings where one speaker initiates an exchange with a formula and the other replies with a formula dependent on the first (Ferguson, 1976). So if someone says to you *How are things?* and you say *Fine, thanks*. then a discourse pattern has been used as well as individual formulae. Such sequential formulaic dependencies are governed by *discourse structure rules*. Again these two features of linguistic knowledge, the use of formulae and their link to discourse structure rules, are independent of each other. Not all formulae are discourse-indexed and not all discourse structure rules are implemented by formulae. For example, turntaking rules (Schiffrin, 1987) do not necessarily involve formulae, although they may do and we have already seen that some formulae are used independently of more extensive discourse sequencing. Where the two come together, that is, where discourse structure rules are indexed for formulae, a *formulaic genre* exists.

With these preliminary definitions now determined, it is possible to begin the exploration of formulaic genres, based on a range of case studies. Each of the studies has something different to tell about the way in which formulaic genres work in their language communities for the speakers and hearers of a language. Preliminary sketches of engagement notices and ice hockey commentary will illustrate central aspects of formulaic genres. Ice hockey commentaries are an oral genre, while engagement notices, to which we return later, are a written genre.

1.2 Placing an engagement notice in *The Times*

Human beings the planet over tend to pair off in situations akin to Western marriage. This is often accompanied by a ritual which serves as a

rite of passage (Gennep, 1960), from the state of being single to the state of being no longer single. Sometimes this ritual is preceded by a preliminary ritual, the announcement of the intent to marry. For centuries in England, this was done by reading, or publishing, the banns in the parish church of the couple concerned. It functioned as a public announcement of a private intention, providing some security that the parties were permitted to marry and thus not undertake an action which would involve them in a breach of the canon law.

In the eighteenth century, with the advent of newspapers it became possible for private individuals to place public notices there. Whether the motivation for publication was the same as that for publishing the banns of marriage, engagement notices have been placed in newspapers for at least a century. One of the newspapers with a history at least this long is *The Times* of London. *The Times* requires the engagement notices placed in it to have a rigid format. This can be called *Times style*. All *Times* engagement notices take the form of a pair of names in bold type at the top of the notice followed by a single formula. *Times style* has the following invariant features.

1. One of two passive-voiced formulae is used. The formulae are:
The engagement is announced between party 1 and party 2
 where the two parties are the people whose names are given in the header above the formula. The parents of the two parties come after their names in the formula.
The forthcoming marriage is announced and will take place on NP₁ at NP₂ between party 1 and party 2.
2. Structural variation of formulae 1 and 2 does not occur.
3. The man who is becoming engaged is always mentioned before the woman, i.e. he is always party 1 and she is always party 2.
4. The time and place of the engagement are never mentioned.

Only three areas of variation are possible:

1. Where the parents are mentioned, the domicile of both sets of the parents is mentioned in almost all cases. Where a parent is not mentioned, the domicile of the parties may be. The domicile of a party is mentioned only in such a case.
2. The address form of the parents has four variants:
 - a. title plus initials plus surname (where the initials in the case of a married couple are those of the husband), e.g. *Mr and Mrs E. C. Brown*;

- b. title plus given name plus surname (where the first name in the case of a married couple is always the given name of the husband, as in *Colonel and Mrs Alisdair Findlay*);
- c. as in b. including the mother's given name but without title, e.g. *Rev James and Susan Potter*;
- d. a 'titled' title, e.g. *Count* plus name.

Deceased parents are referred to as *the late*.²

- 3. The birth order of the man and woman being engaged may or may not be given. When it is, over half of the cases are symmetrical in giving the birth order of both the man and woman. Birth order is given only if parents are mentioned.

A typical *Times* engagement notice would thus read:

Mr L. Norriss and Miss A. Sinclair

*The engagement is announced between Lester, son of Mr and Mrs Edward Norriss, of Bedford, and Alison, daughter of Mr and Mrs Stephen Sinclair, of Evesham, Cornwall.*³

By the earlier definition, *Times* engagement notices constitute a formulaic genre. They consist of a heading comprising of two names followed by one of only two formulae. These formulae are used only for engagement notices. The genre therefore has the simplest of discourse structure rules:

R1 Engagement notice → couple's names + engagement formula

R2 Names → man's name + woman's name

R3 Name → title + initial(s) + family name

(The arrow should be read as 'consists of' while the + should be read as 'is followed by'. In later rules, parentheses indicate choices which may or may not be made and braces around constituents indicate alternatives.)

Typographically the names are in bold while the formula is in plain text on the lines below the names.

These formal characteristics constitute a text type. If one identifies these characteristics in a newspaper notice, then one is reading an engagement notice in *Times* style. However there are non-linguistic features of the context which are linked to the text type and support its

existence socially. A couple's intention to marry is being announced. They may have parents living or deceased. They have placed the notice in the newspaper. In the case of *The Times*, they will have contacted the staff member of *The Times* who deals with such notices and who, no doubt, provides oversight to ensure that the notice is in the required form. Her name and contact details are at the bottom of the list of notices. It is the conjunction of these two elements, the formal text type features as a set, together with the non-linguistic contextual features of the situation, which constitute a genre.

1.3 Calling the face-off⁴

Placing an engagement notice is an elementary formulaic genre but this combination of idiosyncratic characteristics of linguistic form and social context recur in many other situations. The next illustration comes from a different environment, the ice hockey rink. Ice hockey is a sport involving furious skating by two teams of six players in pursuit of a flat rubber disk, the puck. The objective is to get the puck into the goal of the opposing team. From time to time, for example when a player is penalized, there is a stoppage in play. Then play is restarted in a manoeuvre termed a 'face-off'. This involves the puck being picked up by one of the officials controlling the game, called a linesman. For the face-off, two players in the position of 'centre' stand facing one another on either side of the linesman. They must have their skates toeing a line drawn under the ice within a circle, the face-off circle. They must be motionless. When they are, the linesman drops the puck between them and they contest possession of the puck. If they are not still, they are waved out of the face-off circle, and two new centres from the bench on the sidelines must come onto the ice and repeat the process. This episode can be described by the following rule.⁵

R1. Episodes of face-offs

Face-off → call + linesman retrieves puck + skates to face-off circle + centres enter circle + (centre(s) waved out + new player(s) enter(s))ⁿ + puck thrown down by linesman + win.

When professional ice hockey is broadcast on television, the commentary is provided by two commentators: a 'play-by-play' commentator and a 'colour' commentator. The former provides an account of the game as it proceeds while the latter provides comments and conversation when play is stopped (Ferguson, 1983). An ice hockey game takes

60 minutes while the intervals, stoppages (and advertising breaks) take about two hours. Both play-by-play and colour commentators can provide commentary of the face-off since there is a stoppage before the face-off. To illustrate the difference between play-by-play and colour commentary, here are two transcripts of commentaries relating face-offs.

Transcripts 1.1

Play-by-play:

Minnesota's Broten to take the face-off against McCourt and he got the draw to Lindgren.

Colour:

Broten. McCarthy right behind him hoping that Broten can get it back on this draw against Terrion. Broten won't get the chance from the face-off now. He's waved out. So is Terrion. Cicerelli comes in against Gavin. One fifty-one left in this period. Now they drop it in. Or do they? No. Don Hasseldine, the linesman... Now it goes in and the shot from the line...

The discourse structure of a commentary is externally driven since it must follow the game and is dependent on the events the commentator sees, i.e. the events in rule 1. However, it is not just a function of external events. If the commentary of face-off events were entirely externally driven then each sub-episode of the visual events would have a verbal analogue. This is not the case. The sequencing of face-off commentaries is different from that of the face-off itself. Here is a set of transcripts of commentators describing face offs. The descriptions used are in play-by-play commentary mode.

Transcripts 1.2

1. *The draw to Minnesota.*
2. *Broten got the draw.*
3. *Acton against Daoust on this draw. One thirty-three left in the period. Acton got the face-off to Hartsberg.*
4. *To the right of Lemelin, they'll drop it in. Derlago going to take the draw for the Toronto Maple Leafs. Harris parked to his right just back a bit. 'gainst Nilssen of Calgary. Nilssen got the draw.*
5. *Lineman Leon Stickle drops it in. Leafs got the draw.*
6. *It's called for a face-off at the Maple Leaf blue line.*
7. *It was gloved ahead so they'll bring that back.*

8. *They'll bring it back to the Maple Leafs' side of centre ice. Now they're set. Dropped in.*
9. *So they'll bring it back for a face-off to the right of Palmateer in that big circle.*
10. *And they force a face-off.*

These commentary portions have omitted the most frequently employed method of describing a face-off, the null method, whereby the face-off receives no verbal commentary at all. On the basis of such commentary portions, we can construct a rule for the commentary of face-offs as follows:

R2. Discourse structure of face-off commentaries in play-by-play mode.

$$\text{Face-off} \rightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{(locator)} \\ \text{(call)} \end{array} \right\} + ((\text{participants}) + (\text{wave out} + \text{new player(s)})^n + (\text{drop in}) + (\text{win}))$$

It can be seen that rule 1 does not map exactly into rule 2. Specifically some portions of rule 1 are routinely omitted. For example, play-by-play commentaries do not describe the process whereby the linesman retrieves the puck and takes it into the face-off circle, gets set, and raises his arm. Other omissions are more sporadic; no commentary ever reports every episode of what actually happens. There are further restrictions. For example, if a play-by-play commentary includes reference to the participants, then it also includes the outcome of the face-off, but not vice versa. This gives the double parenthesis in rule 2 for these two constituents. The fact that a null commentary is possible derives from the fact that all the constituents of rule 2 are optional.

The discourse structure also has frequency properties. The first of these is that the most frequently used way to report a face-off is not to report it at all. The next most frequent occurrences are to report that a face-off will take place in a particular location or that one team or player has won the face-off. Mention of the drop of the puck is unusual and is likely to be in colour mode.

Although visually all face-offs are very similar, their significance varies depending on where on the rink they are taken and on the current state of the game. Thus a face-off during a power play (when one team has a player sitting in the sin bin) is more significant than one in normal play. A face-off in the centre ice area is not as significant as one inside the zone of either team. A face-off in the last minute of play with the score tied

is more significant than one in the second period. These factors have an effect on whether the face-off receives any commentary and, if it does, how much. There is a tendency for face-off commentaries to be most detailed during power plays or near the end of a game.

To summarize, ice hockey commentaries have discourse structure rules for face-offs where the visual events and the verbal commentary are not isomorphic. The structure of the discourse is therefore not just externally driven and some elements of more or less arbitrary selection enter into the final structure of the commentary.

What of formulae? In the case of ice hockey commentaries, formulae are not hard to find since most of a play-by-play commentary consists of formulae. All the formulae are indexed for particular constituents in discourse structure; we would therefore expect there to be formulae for each constituent. Below, we illustrate formulae for each constituent as identified earlier in rule 2.

Face-off formulae indexed for discourse constituents.

1. Call formulae:

- a. X [_{VP} *hold on for a face-off*]
- b. X [_{VP} *force a face-off*]
- c. *It's called for a face-off.* (locator)

2. Face-off locator formulae:

- a. *Face-off in N territory.*
- b. *Face-off will be in the N zone.*
- c. *The face-off will come outside the N blue line.*
- d. *They will bring it back to the N side of centre ice.*

3. Participants formulae:

- a. X [_{VP} *take it (for N) against Y (for M)*]
- b. X [_{VP} *take the draw (for N) against Y (for M)*]
- c. X [_{VP} *take the face-off (for N) against Y (for M)*]
- d. *X against Y on this draw (locator).*
- e. *X and Y on this draw (locator).*
- f. *X and Y on this face-off (locator).*
- g. *X against Y on this face-off (locator).*

4. Wave out formulae:

- a. *X is waved out (of the circle).*
- b. *X is thrown out (of the circle).*
- c. *X is waved away.*

5. Drop in formulae:

- a. *The puck is dropped in.*
- b. *It's dropped in.*
- c. *They drop it in.*
- d. *There's the drop of the puck.*

6. Win formulae:

- a. *X* [_{VP} *get it back (from the draw)*]
- b. [_{VP} *get it back (from the face-off)*]
- c. [_{VP} *get the draw (to Y)*]
- d. [_{VP} *win the draw (to Y)*]
- e. *X with the draw (to Y)*
- f. *X has the draw (to Y)*
- g. *X gets the draw (to Y)*
- h. *X gets it back (to Y)*

Note that, although there are formulae for all of the discourse elements, there are not formulae for some of the reasonably independent episodes in the actual visual structure of the face-off, i.e. in rule 1. What this shows is that only certain episodes have verbal coding. These are the episodes which are seen as significant. In colour commentaries things are different. Colour commentators may discuss the way a linesman takes a face-off but this will not normally be done using formulae. In other cases, although there is coding for various episodes of the face-off, such formulaic coding is used infrequently. For example, the particular linesman taking the face-off is occasionally mentioned but only when there is time to fill. Normally the significant episodes are those relating to the opposing centres and which of them wins the draw. Thus there are a large number of formulae which may be used for relating these aspects of the face-off but only a handful for other episodes. So, like the discourse structure of facing off, the formulae too only selectively represent the game as it is seen.

Thus commentaries represent the game as it is perceived through an abstract representation rather than through its concrete manifestation on the ice. It is for this reason that commentary exists. If a game were just the visual spectacle with associated sound effects such as the swish of the skates and the thump of bodies onto the boards at the edge of the rink, then television would present the game as the fans in the stands see and hear it. But even the camera is selective, showing what seems significant, and the commentator is similarly selective in what he relates.

A team game, therefore, is not just a sequence of set moves on a playing surface. It is also a set of abstract strategies to implement certain short- and long-term goals. The goals range from getting the puck out of one's own zone, to getting it to another player, to getting it into the opposition's zone, to scoring a goal, to winning a game, a division, a play-off, or ultimately the Stanley Cup, which is the trophy handed out at the end of the season to the winner of the National Hockey League competition. Though the short-term goals are evident in the play, the longer-term goals are not, and it is these (among other things) which inform the commentators' selection both of discourse structure and formulae. (Other factors which play a part are, for example, the commercials which appear to be inserted as soon as the whistle blows for a face-off.)

So the reason that face-offs at centre ice are usually not commented on is that these face-offs usually cannot be directly related to longer-term strategies such as goal scoring. The reason why face-offs during a power play are more often included in commentary is that they are considered likely to lead to the scoring of goals. The dropping of the puck is not considered of any significance at all, however well it may be done. The shooting of the puck, by contrast, is considered significant, even if it is done badly.

Looking at the commentary of this brief episode of the game of ice hockey shows that it is a formulaic genre. The discourse rule for face-offs is more complex and the set of formulae which are indexed for it are more numerous than for *Times* engagement notices. But, as in the case of engagement notices, this formal side, which we can call the text-type side, is inextricably linked to the contextual side, namely the event which is receiving commentary. It is not an exact match with the event but rather provides an account and a cultural interpretation of it.

After the description of these two brief examples of formulaic genres, it is possible to ask what theoretical constructs, namely genres and formulae, lie behind such episodes being designated as formulaic genres.

1.4 What is a genre?

The above two formulaic genres are in two different modes; one written, the other spoken. As a written text type with a long history, engagement notices constitute a genre in terms of the external exigencies which give rise to them and in terms of the internal textual regularities which are manifest in them. This determination is further supported as

follows. First '[i]n the case of newspaper genres ... we find an unmistakable "generic identity"' (Bhatia, 2001:67). Since engagement notices are clearly identifiable in a newspaper, we may assume that they constitute a well-defined genre. Second, engagement notices constitute part of a folk taxonomy of genres relating to rites of passage, folk taxonomies generally being a reliable way of seeing the external factors of a genre since '[g]enres are text categories readily distinguished by mature speakers of a language' (Biber, 1989:5) and 'for those who share genre knowledge within a culture, there is generally a shared name' (Johns, 1997:22). The folk taxonomy further includes births, marriages and deaths notices.

Ice hockey commentary is also one of a family of commentary genres all spoken *ex tempore*. Like engagement notices, native speakers who are familiar with these commentaries can tell in a flash whether the commentary is of cricket, rugby union, American football, baseball, basketball or ice hockey. This means each must be an identifiable text type and have a socio-cultural niche in which it is at home and with which the hearer is familiar. So ice hockey commentary is also a genre.

However, the term and concept *genre* is a contested one. Paltridge (1997) provides an overview of many different approaches taken to the construct *genre*. Many approaches stress the communicative function or purpose of a genre as a defining characteristic. For instance Miller (1994:24) suggests that 'a theoretically sound definition of genre must be centred not on the substance or form of the discourse but on the action it is used to accomplish.' Typical of such a view is the proposal that '[c]ommunicative genres are solutions to specifically communicative problems' (Bergmann & Luckmann, 1995:289). Sometimes the relationship is taken to be deterministic, namely that the communicative function is the sole determining factor in deciding the formal properties of the genre. On the other hand it may be that 'communicative purpose can be sufficiently elusive to be largely unavailable for the initial or early identification and categorization of discourses as belonging to certain genres' (Askehave & Swales, 2001:204). But it does seem the case that '[w]herever socially relevant knowledge is to be transmitted we find "convention" instead of "communicative rationality"' (Guenther & Knoblauch, 1995:5). Therefore it is likely that there are arbitrary conventional elements to all genres as well as functionally motivated ones. These elements collectively, the arbitrary and the functional, can be seen as belonging to either external or internal factors involved in how a genre is to be understood. '[T]he inner structure of communicative genres ... consists of rather diverse elements: words and phrases selected from different registers, formulae and

entire formulaic blocks; rhetorical forms and tropes, stylistic devices, metric and melodic forms rhymes, adjectival and nominal lists, oppositions etc.' (Bergmann & Luckmann, 1995:292), that is, formal linguistic properties. 'The external structure of communicative genres... exhibits a certain degree of obligation, that is, constraints with respect to milieu, the communicative situation, the type of social relationship as well as social categories of actors (men, women, ethnic groups), relevant in such environments' (Guenther & Knoblauch, 1995:8), that is, contextual factors. The context, however, is to be seen in terms of the way natives in a culture view the context within the purview of a genre. To some extent the internal form of a genre can create its external context. An auction without the verbal performance of an auctioneer does not count as an auction and the external context, is, therefore, dependent on the recognition of the internal properties of the genre's text type.

Like all social phenomena which are seen to be similar in some way and which are conceptualized as recurring, this 'is an intersubjective phenomenon, a social occurrence, and cannot be understood on materialist terms' (Miller, 1994:29). The context must therefore not be invested with any more of a materialist interpretation than a linguist would invest in the concept of the phoneme. Methodologically this leads to the proposal that '[t]o avoid reifying "the context" it is necessary to study the textual details that illuminate the manner in which participants are collectively constructing the world around them' (Bauman & Briggs, 1990:69). Since genres play a role in the socio-cultural life of a community, genres have the capacity to reveal wider features of the culture which sustains them. The following chapters explore a number of formulaic genres for, amongst other things, what they have to tell us about the communities in which they exist.

What then do others have to say about formulaic genres? Recall that the term *formulaic genre* will be used in this book to designate a variety of a language (either spoken or written) which contains discourse structure rules which in turn index formulae for particular roles in the discourse and where a significant amount of the discourse is made up of formulae (Edwards & Sienkewicz, 1990). Recall also that a formula is a phrasal lexical item having associated conditions of use which determine its non-linguistic usage. For more extensive treatments see K. Aijmer (1996), Howarth (1996), Moon (1998), Pawley & Syder (1983), Wray (2002).

We have seen that, even in the tiny genre of *Times* engagement notices, there is variability. There is general agreement that genres are subject to variation and change in both their internal and external

features. As Guenther & Knoblauch (1995:6) put it, '[g]enres are ... open to change and cultural variation'. However they also exhibit stabilities since 'genres emerge within a particular socio-historical context and are reinforced over time as a situation recurs ... These genres, in turn, shape future responses to similar situations' (Yates & Orlikowski, 1992:305). If we assume that 'the relationship between formal features and communicative function has generally been treated as one of means to ends, such that form becomes meaningful insofar as it is connected with some kind of content or function' (Bauman & Briggs, 1990:65), then variation in the features of a genre may be significant in some way. So, just as formulaic genres themselves are significant in their communities, the significance of genre variation is also to be sought in the cultural life of the communities of practice whose members place engagement notices in newspapers, perform as auctioneers, or as horse race callers. This is so because 'conventional discourse genres are part of the linguistic habitus that native actors bring to speech, but ... such genres are also produced in speech under various local circumstances' (Hanks, 1987:685).

We would therefore expect to find, in the case of some genres, that variational data would yield to an analysis on the basis, for example, of geographic dialect parameters, idiolectal parameters, housestyle parameters and so forth. In other words, genrelects are likely to exist. Tobacco auction speech, for example, shares linguistic features with other auctioning varieties but has unique features as well. These features are to be heard in the tobacco country of the southern United States (Kuiper & Tillis, 1985). As such they are characteristic of a region as well as an occupation. Engagement notices placed in New Zealand and Australian newspapers also differ significantly, suggesting that there exist regional genrelects of such notices.

1.5 Properties of formulae?⁶

So far only a definition of formulae has been given. Before proceeding further we need to be as explicit about formulae as we have been about genres. The distinctions to be made here will later be important in showing how formulae vary, since all the features which are outlined below are potential sources of variation and thus for differentiating among genrelects. Suppose that formulae are PLIs and that each PLI is a lexical item with its own entry in the mental lexicon of a speaker who knows it. Such knowledge is potentially complex. Furthermore, not all native speakers of a language who know a particular PLI will necessarily know

it in exactly the same way, i.e. some will know it as having properties which other speakers will not know (Fraser, 1970:23; Mel'čuk, 1995:171).

Since PLIs are phrases, speakers normally know at least two of the words in the phrase. We can think of these words as **lexicalized constituents** and define such a constituent as one where the word-level lexical content of the constituent is given in the lexical entry of the PLI (Verstraten, 1992). For example, in the *let alone* construction discussed by Fillmore, Kay & O'Connor (1988) the words *let alone* are lexicalized constituents of the construction. Testing for this property is often done by substituting for a lexicalized constituent (Gläser, 1986, 1995; Verstraten, 1992:27). If the substitution results in the phrase no longer being recognizable as a PLI then this shows the original phrase was a PLI with a lexicalized constituent. PLIs may also contain a **bound word** (Aronoff, 1976). These are single words which occur only within a PLI. For example *take umbrage at* contains the word *umbrage* which cannot occur freely, and occurs in no other PLI.⁷

Since PLIs are phrases where not every word need be specified, PLIs can contain **slots** (Koopman & Sportiche, 1991; Williams, 1994). A slot in the syntactic representation of a PLI is a position in the structure which requires to be 'filled' with other lexical items but which is not filled in the representation of the item in the lexicon. For example, in the PLI *take NP to task*, the NP is an obligatory complement of the verb which must be filled for the phrase to be used grammatically but the lexical content of the NP is not given in the lexical entry of the PLI.

Sometimes slots also have an additional **slot restriction**. While the syntactic category of a slot constrains what it may contain syntactically, there are frequently other constraints of an arbitrary kind. For example, some slots must be filled with animate or human NPs when that is not an inherent requirement of the verb of which the NP is a complement, i.e. not the result of the s-selection properties of the verb (Chomsky, 1996:54). Again examples of slot restrictions are given in Fillmore, Kay & O'Connor (1988) for the *let alone* construction.

Some PLIs have **optional constituents** which may or may not be used. They are part of what the speaker knows when (s)he knows the PLI but their use is optional. For example, in the English PLI *breathe one's last breath* the final noun is optional; speakers can and do just say *breathe one's last*. Note that optional constituents are not just adjuncts which may be added freely. The form of words is particular and is part of what native speakers know of the particular PLI.

In some PLIs there appears to be more than one lexical item functioning in the same position. *To be in a bad mood* is equivalent to *being in*

a bad temper. It seems that *mood* and *temper* function as alternatives as last noun in this PLI. But there are no other possible nouns here that are 'known' as part of knowing the PLI. *Mood* and *temper* thus constitute a **selection set**. Selection sets only occur where the PLI is semantically and pragmatically equivalent regardless of which member of the set is used.

Some PLIs will take freely inserted adjunct constituents. Others will not. This can be termed the PLIs' **modifiability** (Nicolas, 1995). For example, one can *get annoyed* or *get very annoyed* but one cannot modify the dismissive PLI *Get lost!* to *Get very lost!*

PLIs have greater or lesser degrees of **flexibility** syntactically under movement, supposing a theory of syntax which allows movement. Classically, the PLI *kick the bucket* will not passivize (Nunberg, Sag & Wasow, 1994).

Restricted collocations occur (Mackin, 1978; Mel'čuk, 1998). For example, if one wishes to use a bus as a means of public transport, one is said to *catch the bus* and then *get on the bus*. One does not *trap the bus* or *get in the bus*. Restricted collocations involve preferential selection of word combinations where such combinations are arbitrary. They may also be idiomatic, i.e. not semantically compositional. Catching the bus is, in some sense idiomatic but getting on the bus could be seen quite literally to be placing one's feet on the floor of the bus or oneself on its seats. Wine is (classically) either white or red; it is not ever purple or light green regardless of the truth conditions of these colours in collocation with *wine*. *To the best of one's abilities* is what English speakers say rather than *at the best of one's abilities*. In terms of their semantic properties neither preposition is preferable. Both create semantically well-formed and appropriate compositional meanings in this construction. Yet one is lexicalized as a restricted collocation and the other is not.

If the meaning of the whole PLI is a compositional function of the meaning of its constituent parts then it is **fully compositional**. Thus PLIs with this property will have all the possible meanings available from the semantic interpretation of the senses of their constituents. For example, the checkout farewell *Have a nice day* is fully compositional but is a PLI.

It is possible for a PLI to be compositional in that the meaning of the whole is a compositional function of the meaning of its constituents, but without all the possible readings of its words being available in the lexicon. For example, a political party could be a social occasion which is political, but in its lexicalized form it is an organization which functions to select and have elected members of a legislature. This is one, but only

one, of the possible compositional meanings of *political party*, given that *party* is polysemous. It is thus **selectively compositional**.

A lexical item which is non-compositional in its meaning, i.e. in which the meaning of the whole is not a predictable semantic function of its constituent words is **idiomatic**. In some PLIs only one of the words has an idiomatic sense, i.e. a sense that it does not have when on its own. This sense only exists in combination with the other words in a particular PLI. Such PLIs are **unilaterally idiomatic**. Many restricted collocations are unilaterally idiomatic. In some PLIs more than one word may have a sense that they have only in the PLI. For example a *red herring* is neither red nor a herring, i.e. both words have special senses they have nowhere else but in construction within this PLI (Weinreich, 1969). Such PLIs are **bilaterally idiomatic**.

It seems important in the discussion of the semantic properties of PLIs to differentiate these clearly from the syntactic properties of the same PLI. The work of Mel'čuk, as exemplified in work such as Mel'čuk (1995), makes it clear that PLIs can, in many cases, be seen as mapping semantic predicates idiosyncratically onto verbs for specific arguments. So, for example, the weather is forecast, rather than predicted.

The properties above relate to the formal properties of a PLI in terms of its syntax and semantics but many PLIs also have conventional conditions of use. A **formula** has been defined earlier as a PLI with contextually restricted conditions of use. For example, *I'm sorry*. is a PLI which is used to offer an apology. Speech act theory provides examples of formulae and sub-classifications of types of usage conditions. However this is just a beginning. Every small-scale ritual tends to be accompanied by formulae. On aeroplanes, cabin crew use them: *'What would you like to drink, Sir/Madam?'*; flight crew use them: *'This is your/the captain speaking'*.

1.6 Goffmanian and Bakhtinian native speakers

I now return to the native speaker of a language with whom I started and who is central to everything we shall explore. Who is this person? They are not a Chomskian abstraction 'an ideal native speaker-listener, in a homogeneous speech community, who knows its language perfectly' (Chomsky, 1965:3) but closer to a flesh and blood person.⁸ It follows from the descriptions of the two formulaic genres earlier in this chapter that not everyone who speaks English is thereby proficient in placing engagement notices in *The Times*, or in producing fluent commentaries of face-offs in ice hockey games, or even of understanding either genre.

Each of these formulaic genres has text type features of an arbitrary and unpredictable kind and is a cultural artefact belonging to its own speakers and hearers within their own community of practice. Individuals, however, do not all belong to the same communities of practice; they do not all have the same proficiency in the language games that belong to such communities. I might perfectly well understand what an ice hockey commentator was saying without being able to provide such a commentary myself or, in contrast, I might be a fluent cricket commentator but know nothing about ice hockey and its peculiarities.

Such a view of the human condition is akin to that of Irving Goffman. Goffman (1969) sees human beings as being actors on the stage of life. Unlike bees, whose place in the social scheme of bees is genetically predetermined and who can do little about being drones, if they are drones, human beings acquire multiple social roles through acting and interacting in their social environments. It was not predetermined by your genetic endowment that you should be a student, a checkout operator or a member of a jazz band.

Human beings gain social knowledge and the capacity to behave in socially appropriate ways through interacting with other humans. In many ways, you learn to be a child in the way children do, in the culture in which you become a child; you learn how to whine for ice creams, you learn how to thank your grandparents for birthday presents, and cultures differ as to what roles they make available. In New Zealand, for example, I cannot become a shaman (or perhaps an intellectual).

Such socially appropriate ways of being and behaving can be seen in many cases as involving routines. Goffman sees life as having many different routines. Such routines constitute 'a pre-established pattern of action which is unfolded during a performance and which may be presented or played through on other occasions' (Goffman, 1969:27). Each routine is part of a role which we play as we present ourselves to others on the particular stage appropriate to that role. The role may sometimes be played calculatingly and sometimes not. For example, there are times when we may not realize that we are playing the role of supplicant to a superior (although we are). We may listen more attentively and pay close attention to her suit, offering positive backchannels to everything she says. Sometimes we can be calculating in doing the same thing, realizing that by doing so we are more likely to ingratiate ourselves.

There are aspects of the way we perform routines which we can more easily control. For example, we generally control what we say with some care. But there are times when we find it very difficult to control how we perform. For example, we can produce involuntary laughter at

quite inopportune times. Generally, Goffman suggests, people present themselves as the social situation dictates and not as they might personally feel. Checkout operators at supermarkets greet us and take their leave of us in ways that they personally might prefer not to do. This is made clear by a letter to the editor in a local newspaper after a previous correspondent had indicated her displeasure at such formulaic greetings. (I shall suggest in chapter 6 that the view below is jaundiced.)

Talking in shops

Sir – Mrs J. Fleming (January 16) complains about staff exchanging pleasantries with her in supermarkets.

After more than 15 years in the supermarket industry I think that I speak for most check-out operators when I say the vast majority do not even care if you live or die, let alone if you have a nice day.

I can assure you that the only reason you are asked how you are or if you have had a nice day is that they are only following an edict from various head offices.⁹

All parties in a situation where routines are being performed will tend to agree about what is mutually required of them when they present themselves. Staff serving in a dress shop and their clients both know that one role of the client is to model the clothes they might be interested in purchasing and it is not for the shop attendant to model the clothes. This situation is different in a haute couture establishment where there may be models present. When serving in a café, waiting staff do not tell clients that they can now go and pick up their coffee from the kitchen; they bring it to them when it has been made. We take such agreements about the nature of our performances for granted, but there is nothing inevitable about them and when disruptions to the social order occur we become aware of the regularities of our routine performances and those of others. This includes the degree of congruence between the performances of all the parties to a routine. The performances of various parties to a performance should be appropriate. Turning up at a high church wedding dressed in shorts and a singlet, drunk, and half an hour after the ceremony has begun, is not in keeping with everyone else who is dressed in formal dress and arrives on time, sober (or at least presenting themselves as such).

Goffman notes that routines are often enacted by teams working in consort. Group members perform with an awareness of how others are performing and what they are performing. For example, an operation in an operating theatre requires all the parties to work together, each

with his or her appointed role. Often those roles include scripts. In a business meeting where a team is presenting, one person will hand the floor to the next by saying, *Now I'll hand over to Jo who will explain....* This view of human beings is seen by Goffman as involving 'the very structure of the self...seen in terms of how we arrange for such performances' where 'the individual (is)...viewed as a performer, a harried fabricator of impressions...;...viewed as a character, a figure, typically a fine one, whose spirit, strength, and other sterling qualities the performance was designed to evoke' (Goffman, 1969:244). We will find that all the factors outlined above are significant in understanding the native speaker as a user of formulaic genres. In Goffman's terms, a native speaker is someone with a range of linguistic and non-linguistic competencies (of various strengths) in playing particular parts. Some of these parts have associated scripts in the form of formulaic genres which go with the role and define the routine. I have already hinted that fluent sport commentators and proficient engagement notice writers have acquired native-speaker competence in these respective genres by being able to command both the text type and the non-linguistic contingencies which are associated with it. I have also suggested that such fluency and proficiency is not universal. No native speaker commands all the roles and knows all the scripts in a culture. For a clearer emphasis on the linguistic side of genres and native speaker competence we now turn to Bakhtin (1986). Bakhtin has this to say about genres: 'We speak only in definite speech genres, that is, all our utterances have definite relatively stable typical *forms of construction of the whole*. Our repertoire of oral (and written) speech genres is rich. We use them confidently and skilfully *in practice...*' (Bakhtin, 1986:78). 'If speech genres did not exist and we had not mastered them,..., speech communication would be almost impossible' (Bakhtin, 1986:79). But as suggested earlier, '[m]any people who have an excellent command of a language often feel quite helpless in certain spheres of communication because they do not have a practical command of the generic forms used in the given spheres' (Bakhtin, 1986:80). In sum, and in line with the argument pursued thus far, 'a native speaker is given not only the mandatory form of the national language (lexical composition and grammatical structure), but also forms of utterance that are mandatory, that is, speech genres' (Bakhtin, 1986:80).

Bakhtin's view of genres thus proposes the genre as a way of shaping utterances into prescribed forms which are socially licensed. A native speaker cannot, according to Bakhtin, be one without such knowledge of genres but such knowledge is always partial since it has to do with

the playing of Goffmanian parts. What genres do is link these roles to their prescribed forms of utterance.

1.7 Conclusion

In this chapter the stage has been set for the exploration of a range of formulaic genres which are more complex than the two simple examples provided so far. Each will be examined from both its formal and its social side but with the emphasis on the social. The aim is to place the native speaker as a social being centre stage. I will suppose that such a speaker has already acquired native speaker competence of the Chomskian kind but I will also suppose that this is not enough to be a native speaker in any way that makes being a speaker socially useful, and thus, that being a Chomskian native speaker is not in itself socially sufficient.

In the next chapter I turn to organized horse racing and the way in which it is given voice in the formulaic genre of race calling.

Index

- accessibility condition 193
 apology formulae 160–1
 artistic deformation 192–7
- Bakhtin 24–5,
 base form of PLI 193
 body control 116–17, 137
 business letters 80–1, 91
- carnival 38
 checkout operators 23
 class 88–9, 173
 colour commentary 10–11, 33
 commencing a meal 66–71
 communicative competence 3, 26
 conditions of use 1–2, 21, 203
 consultants 73–4, 114–15, 211–12
 convention 16
 cueing 122–36
- data collection 189–90
 directives 116
 parade ground 117–20
 pump aerobics 120–30
 dance calling 130–6
 discourse structure rules 7, 12, 49,
 101, 210
 of auctioneering 179–85
 of aerobics instructors 123–5
 of checkout operators 106–10
 of face-offs 12
 of Public Criticism Meetings 170
 of weather forecasts 44–53
- e-mail 76, 80–5, 91
 engagement notices 7–10, 138–52
 English as a foreign language 81,
 86–7
 ethnography 27, 41
 exercise 120–1
- fieldwork 73
 face 59–60, 71, 121–2
- finite state systems 101–8, 110, 142,
 182, 185–6, 209–10
 formality 82–4, 140, 147–55, 161
 formulae 6–7
 discourse indexing 13
 of aerobics instructors 125–9
 of auctioneering 181–6
 of business 82–5
 of checkout operators 101–10
 of classroom greeting 163–5
 of the Cultural Revolution 159–73
 of dance callers and cuers 131–3
 of engagement notices 140–2
 of ice hockey commentary 13–14
 formulaic genres 3, 17
 fortune's wheel 32–8, 207
 fraud 76–7
 frequency 40
 of checkout formulae 111
 of engagement formulae 141–4,
 147–52
- gambling 30
 generalization in social science 137,
 153–4
 gender 136–7
 genre 13–18
 genre variation 95, 153–4
 genrelect ix
 Goffman 22–4, 77, 81, 136
 greeting 61–6, 95, 100–1,
 159–60
- historical reconstruction 177–8
 house style 144–6, 207
 human ethics processes 115, 209
- ice hockey commentary 10–15
 idiolect 109–13, 127–8, 134–5,
 204
 idiom 21, 119, 161
 imperative 119

- language acquisition 3–4, 55–6,
72, 123
- leave taking 99, 107–9, 160
- lectal continuum 58, 61
- literalization 196
- loan translation 61, 72
- meal beginnings 66–71
- native speaker 3, 21, 24, 26,
72, 73–4
- oral tradition 56, 109, 123,
174, 183
- participant observation 39
- perception of a persona 88–91
- performance 205
- phrasal lexical items 5–6, 18
properties of 19–21
- play-by-play commentary 10–11, 33
- politeness 121, 136–7
- politeness genres 59–72
- prosody 119, 182–3, 187–8
- Public Criticism Meeting 166–75
- ‘rate of return’ 211
- recording speech 39–40, 99,
124, 178
- recoverability condition 193
- restricted collocation 20, 84–5
- rite of passage 138–9
- ritual 27, 99–100, 130, 158, 166,
175, 207
- routines 22–4, 97–9, 119
- sample size 40–1, 190, 208
- scripts 24, 42
- service encounter 96
- sincerity 71, 102
- slips of the tongue 193–4
- small talk 96–7, 103–5
- social change 157–8
- style 83–4, 89–90, 144–7, 155
- text type 9, 138, 152–4
- variability 17–18, 152–3
- variables 140–2
- verbatim recall 123
- vocabulary 3–5
structurally complex 5