



Book Review: Bruce, Ian. 2020. *Expressing Critical Thinking through Literary Texts*.

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The present book is divided into eight different chapters preceded by a list of tables and a preface and then followed by appendices, notes, references and the index. The first two chapters are dedicated to the introduction and the literature review. In the former, the author clearly states the aim of the book which is to explore how critical thinking is communicated through written text. The author also defines the terminology he is going to use throughout the book and specifically addresses what he understands by critical thinking, “the [...] process of the communication” (11) of this evaluative judgement, text and discourse, which are the main terms he refers to in the next sections. However, not only does he define these terms in Chapter 1, but he also reminds them to the readers in the following chapters for the sake of cohesion and utmost relevance. Chapter 2 presents previous studies on critical thinking and illustrates how the author’s book contributes to this area by departing from them but taking a whole different analytical method. Then, five chapters are devoted to the case-studies, which are five different writing genres: the university essay, PhD discussion chapters, research article literature reviews, corporate disclosure communication and journalistic commentary. The last chapter serves the purpose of summarising all the findings and re-analysing them in terms of how they differ from genre to genre.

The Introduction (Chapter 1) helps the reader familiarise with the concepts related to critical thinking and texts, i.e., critical thinking, enacting criticality, text and discourse are the main repeated definitions throughout the book due to their paramount role in understanding the further sections. In this same part of the book, the author supports the importance of critical thinking in the academic world with the value that Governments and educational institutes themselves have placed on teaching critical thinking because of the role it now has in the Western Scholarship and science. It is in this area that argumentation and reasoning are expected when explaining or illustrating ideas, hence the need for knowing how to communicate criticality. This book shows how adults express and learn how to express critical thinking but even in primary schools this is shown to pupils from an early stage (see Lombardi et al., 2021). Nevertheless, there is no unified system of teaching it although previous philosophical and scientific traditions had been considered as indicative methods. The author has noticed a gap in this kind of research for little focus has been put on considering the expert writer as a member of a disciplinary discourse community in which both social and cognitive processes should be explored.

This gap in the methodology is the core element of his own proposed method in Chapter 2, the social genre/cognitive genre model. The author presents the literature review in this section and highlights those studies prior to his own which generally tended to focus on a less holistic analysis and on a single grammatical feature believed to be employed to express critical thinking. Contrary to most of them, he proposes to manually analyse the resources employed to express critical thinking and to organise them in terms of social and cognitive features. He believes that these features are, at the same time, choices made by the author to create a cohesive and coherent

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text in which we should expect to find organisational patterns with some micro and macro-level linguistic devices. Besides, the author also suggests that it could be the case that in each genre, the analysed features vary depending on the context within which this text was produced. The author considers that academic or professional texts require more organised, conventionalised structures that should be easily identifiable by readers and reproduced by experienced writers. This is supported by the fact that there is no possibility of feedback from the readers, therefore, intelligibility must be ensured.

As for the methodology, most of the studies used corpus linguistics tools and, therefore, some linguistic features could have remained unnoticed. The approach taken always forgot to bear in mind cognitive theory and, especially, how the human mind conceives and categorises information. To solve this, the author's model is based on two principles from cognitive psychology's categorisation theory: (1) "complex categories are formed in response to different types of intention or purpose and" (2) "complex categories leave a top-down, internal organisational structure" (p. 41). The social genre/cognitive genre model gathers both principles since principle (1) is encompassed in the social approach that defends there is a social purpose in the writing of texts and, principle (2) is covered by the cognitive approach that delineates human's need for organisation. This methodology then manually analyses features used to express critical thinking and organises them in terms of the proposed genre model.

The next 5 chapters present case studies that the author has previously carried out and published separately and were then gathered as sections of this book addressing critical thinking. Chapter 3 deals with the university essay and how critical thinking is expressed in it. The reason for choosing this genre is that it is a common assignment task (mostly in humanities and social sciences) that allows the conveyance of criticality in a more or less conventionalised structure: introduction, body and conclusion. In his study (Bruce, 2016) he proposed two research questions regarding statements that expressed a critical evaluation and the textual resources employed in them. This study of the textual resources employed is the clear gap that interrelates all the studies present in the book. Overall, results showed that the most common elements employed in this genre statements were interpropositional relations (mainly grounds conclusion, reason result and concession contraexpectation) and metadiscourse devices (mainly hedging and attitude markers). Departing from his results, the author further gives a coherent explanation of how this outcome could successfully be extrapolated and applied to the teaching of essay writing. Nevertheless, he reminds that the main constraint of this study is that it is only of exploratory use for the sample is not big enough due to the lack of resources and trained examiners apart from himself. Having clarified that, the author proposes the analysis/synthesis method, which starts by identifying linguistic elements that express critical thinking in writings by isolating and practicing their use and, after this phase is completed, the student should be encouraged to test them in his own works.

Chapter 4 is based on the study of PhD discussions in applied linguistics (Bruce, 2018) and, specifically, the elements used to express critical thinking in this genre. The choice of this particular section of the PhD dissertation is that it is in it where students critically assess their results and how the implications and limitations of their own studies might affect the overall work. The main focus of prior studies such as Hopkins and Dudley-Evans' (1988) was on determining the 'move' structure for the organisation of the content following Swales (1981, 1990) move structure division. And, thus, little research has addressed the specific textual elements that construe criticality in this genre. The results of this study indicate that there are 3 main key elements of the genre model that underline this critical thinking construction: recursive content schema (point, support, evaluation), coherence relations in the evaluation section (reason result, concession contraexpectation, grounds conclusion) and metadiscourse devices (hedges and attitude markers). In this case, there is again a constraint based on the fact that the data is not quantitatively representative and, consequently, results can only be extrapolated and used as

indicative. Even though the pedagogical advice for the writing of this section is in line with the one given in Chapter 3, in this case, the ‘evaluation’ section found in the content schema was apparently non-obligatory. This prompts the author to advise teachers to provide their students with chapters that both include and exclude the ‘evaluation’ section to enable them the possibility of drawing a comparison between them.

The third case study is presented in chapter 5. This involves the analysis of how critical thinking is expressed in research article literature reviews (Bruce, 2014a). The reason why the author considers this to be a place where criticality is found is that this chapter includes not only a review of all prior studies but an assessment of them in terms of methods, research design, etc. This section has been studied by previous researchers who seemingly agree on the four sections into which it is usually divided: introduction, methodology, results and discussion. These papers have mostly analysed the organisation of the ‘moves’ and the characteristic linguistic features of each of them. But there was no direct mentioning of how critical thinking was developed in terms of genre-specificity or cognitive structure. After manually analysing the corpus, the results showed that there were three elements of the genre model normally preferred, and writers seemed to select them consistently. There was a use of content schema (i.e., Swales’ move structure), attitude markers (i.e., writer stance) and the concession contraexpectation relation. Based on these results, a similar advice of following the analysis-synthesis method is given to teach writing to students but, in this case, the author deems important to emphasise that the overuse of these features could be an issue for novice writers. The main difference between this and the other two cases is the social facet of the genre, Research Article introductions’ structures are more conventionalised, and they tend to reveal a more experienced writer that is addressing an academic community.

Chapter 6 deals with how critical thinking is expressed in corporate disclosure communication and it is based on a study carried out by the author in 2014 regarding the fund manager commentary genre (Bruce, 2014b). This genre was included because companies seek to convey a feeling of transparency and, in order to do so, they make use of linguistic devices that help support and organise their arguments. The findings revealed that (1) there was a need of schematic knowledge (both extralinguistic and intralinguistic knowledge to understand context), (2) there was a conventionalised pattern in the ‘moves’ and that (3) there is a use of attitude markers usually found within extended semantic prosodies. At the same time, the use of the features throughout the texts that conformed the corpus, showed that there was a mix of non-expert and expert readers and a clear communicative purpose. At this stage, the author reminds that no strong general claims should be made due to the insufficient data analysis but proposes once more the phases of analysis and synthesis to gain a more holistic view when teaching and learning. However, he does also find a difference between this genre and the previous one: the use of attitude markers and metaphors. In this genre these linguistic devices are more frequent, and they are employed to establish negative or positive themes to fit the overall communicative purpose. This is to say, the difference appears to be on the context and the communicative purposes of each genre.

The last case study is presented in chapter 7 and the genre analysed is the journalistic commentary. Contrary to the last case studies, the data collection method only included one specific journalist. The chapter includes definitions that the reader needs in order to understand the text. The terms are hegemony, ideology and neoliberalism for this particular journalist is an advocate of social democracy. The results of this study shows that with regards to context, there is a need for schematic knowledge since there are references to current issues in the UK. As for the writer stance, this seems to be construed not only by means of attitude markers but also metaphors, imperatives and rhetorical questions. In this chapter there is a recapitulation of the definitions of some concepts such as ‘attitude markers’ so as to ensure the reader is following the explanations. Content schema also appeared to be quite consistent in this writer’s works, mainly a three-move content schema. When all these devices are taken altogether, it is assumed that the readership is literate and well-informed because, otherwise,

the reading process would be too challenging. Therefore, the author suggests that the choice of devices could rely on the communicative effect that wants to be achieved by each of the genres. These devices, at the same time, shape the expression of critical thinking through genres that are further materialised into “higher and lower-level generic elements operating synergistically in text” (63). This idea is further repeated in chapter 8 in which readers find the conclusion with a restatement of the main aim of the book, which is fully addressed throughout the work, and a summary of the results and the discussions that were found in each of the different chapters.

Overall, this book embodies a shift in focus on how critical thinking is expressed through different writing genres from an atomistic perspective to a holistic one. By having proposed a new method that includes both social and cognitive perspectives, the author has obtained results that can be extrapolated and applied to the teaching of expressing criticality through words. Similarly, it paves the way for the discovery of the reasoning behind the different usages of linguistic devices that seem to be genre-specific. With regards to its limitations, and as the author points out, further studies could consider a bigger corpus and more researchers to analyse it so as to provide more statistically significant results. Similarly, instead of a completely manual analysis, corpus linguistics tools could be of use when tagging the texts and further studying in depth the corpus following a corpus-driven approach. In general terms, the book has contributed to the theoretical study of the expression of critical thinking and how it is conceived and, moreover, it has also provided techniques that can be applied to teaching this knowledge, as is the case of the analysis/synthesis phase.

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Maria Birlea is a PhD candidate at the University of Salamanca (Spain) and a member of LINDES research group. Her research deals with the study of multimodal literature, with a focus on the recurrent patterns for coupling image and wording in multimodal texts. She is particularly interested in the simultaneous combination of visual and verbal resources in the text, as well as how textual resources are used to enact criticality in academic writing, particularly from a systemic functional perspective.

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